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1873





LECTURES

ON

THE NATURE, SUBJECTS, AND MODE

OF

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

BY

JOHN T. PRESSLY, D. D.

PITTSBURGH:

PRINTED BY A. JAYNES, FRANKLIN HEAD, THIRD STREET.

1841.

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PREFACE.

To the Members of the First Associate Reformed Church, Allegheny.

MY DEAR BRETHREN :

A remarkable providence removed me from the place of my birth, and from a beloved congregation, to take charge of the Theological Seminary in this place. When I first took up my abode among you, we were strangers to each other. But, if I came among you a stranger, I soon found myself in the midst of kind and warm-hearted christian friends. In addition to the duties incumbent upon me as Professor of Theology, I was afterward called to take the charge of your souls. It is now eight years since I commenced my pastoral labors among you. During the first winter of my connection with you, some of you will remember, that a room in the basement of a small building was sufficiently spacious to accommodate us all. It was *the day of small things*. But while Memory performs her wonted office, I can never forget the pleasant hours I spent with you in that

humble room where, with a glance of the eye, I could see when every member was in his place.

In the month of June, 1833, the Lord's Supper was dispensed among you for the first time; on which occasion, sixty-six persons were admitted to the communion of the church. And now, by the good hand of our God upon us, the number of our communicants exceeds four hundred. May our growth in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, keep pace with our numerical increase! Your establishment in the truth, and your advancement in the divine life, I hope I can say in truth, are objects near to my heart. *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth.* To you these Lectures, delivered originally with a view to your instruction, and now published in accordance with your request, are respectfully presented, as a small testimonial of the gratitude and regard of your affectionate pastor.

JOHN T. PRESSLY.

ALLEGHENY, Feb. 8th, 1841.

LECTURES

ON

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

LECTURE I.

“Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”—MATTHEW 28:19.

“IN vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” Such is the grave charge which our Lord prefers against those, who, by their tradition, made the commandment of God of none effect. In every period of the church the pride of the depraved heart has displayed itself, in attempting to improve the institutions of heaven, by incorporating with them something of human contrivance. But from the words, to which I have referred, we learn, that to render our religious homage acceptable to God, it must be offered in accordance with the divine will; and that whatever may be their pretended zeal for the ordinances of religion, they worship God in vain, whose fear toward him is taught by the precept of men. In every religious service in which we engage, our first inquiry, therefore, should be, what is the divine appointment? For

if, regardless of the authority of God, we come before him, in the observance of rites of mere human institution, we expose ourselves to the merited rebuke, "Who hath required this at your hands?"

Among the ordinances of christianity which have been instituted for the perfecting of the saints, and for the edifying of the body of Christ, baptism occupies a prominent place. This institution derives its origin from the appointment of Jesus Christ, the only lawgiver in Zion, and was designed not only to distinguish his followers from the world which lieth in wickedness, but to confirm their faith in the great doctrines of the gospel, which it so impressively teaches, and to build them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation. Having died for our sin, and having risen for our justification, and all power in heaven and in earth being given unto him, our Lord invested his apostles with a commission to go forth and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Their ministry was no longer to be confined to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but they were to preach the gospel to every creature and to make disciples in all nations, receiving into the christian church, by baptism, all who embraced the religion of Jesus. Baptism is, then, an ordinance of Jesus Christ, by our reception of which, we solemnly declare ourselves to be his disciples. By submitting to this rite of his appointment, we avowedly take his yoke upon us, and acknowledge our entire subjection to his authority in all things. When the administration of this ordinance is witnessed, it is natural for the world to inquire, "What mean ye by this service?" And to such an inquiry, the professed followers of Christ should always be

prepared to give an intelligible and satisfactory answer.

It is therefore proposed in the present lecture, to inquire into the meaning of this institution, and the nature of the profession which is made in receiving it.

It is well known that there has been no little controversy in the christian world, with regard to the subjects and the mode of baptism. Whatever diversity of opinion may exist among professing christians with regard to these things, it is a matter in which all are equally interested, to understand the nature, and spirit, and meaning of the institution. And yet, it is apprehended, that, while things of less importance have been the theme of zealous disputation, it is a fault common to many on both sides of the general controversy, that they overlook the meaning and intention of the institution itself. Nor let any one imagine that this is a matter of little importance. For if we do not, in some degree, understand what this ordinance was intended to teach, or if we have imbibed false views of its nature and design, no matter how scriptural may be the mode according to which this rite may have been administered to us, it would be vain to expect our reception of it can be either acceptable to God or profitable to ourselves. Let us then inquire, what are some of the important doctrines which are taught in baptism?

1. In this ordinance, we have a decided testimony to the doctrine of a *trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead*. A proper knowledge of God lies at the foundation of all true religion. And as this is a doctrine in which the scriptural character of God is involved, it is a fundamental principle in the christian system. If, in the revelation given of himself,

God is represented as existing in a trinity of persons, then they who reject the divinity of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, do not worship the God of the Bible, and cannot be recognized as having any just claim to the christian name. And on the other hand, if the true God does not exist in a trinity of persons, then, they who believe in the divinity of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and therefore render to them religious worship, are justly chargeable with idolatry. A diversity of opinion on this subject is, consequently, not a matter of indifference, but must necessarily give a character to our views of the plan of salvation revealed in the gospel. The doctrine of the Trinity, then, lies at the foundation of the christian system, and in the ordinance of baptism, we have a plain testimony in support of it. By the appointment of Jesus Christ, the person to whom this rite is administered is baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Here are three distinct persons, in whose name we are baptized and to whom we are solemnly dedicated. And while there is a distinction of persons, they are one in name, in nature and perfections, and have an equal claim to all divine glory.

For a knowledge of this doctrine, we are indebted exclusively to divine revelation. It is so entirely above the discoveries of unassisted reason, that vain man, prone to glory in his own wisdom rather than learn in humility from the Bible, has in every period of the church, manifested an unwillingness to receive it. But while it is admitted to be a truth, which unassisted reason never could have discovered, yet, when made known by revelation, it contains nothing contradictory to sound reason; and consequently, however incomprehensible it may be, it involves no

absurdity. If we maintained that God is three, in the same sense in which he is one, it is conceded that such a doctrine would be liable to the charge of contradiction and absurdity. And, therefore, as rational creatures, we could not believe it. But, it involves no contradiction to maintain, that in the unity of the divine nature there is a threefold personality. If any one should vainly inquire, How can three distinct persons exist in the unity of the Godhead? I reply, this is a matter which it would be presumption in the creature to undertake to explain. "Who can, by searching, find out God? who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?" The question for us to determine is, simply, what is the revelation which God has given of himself? This we are bound to receive implicitly, however far the truth revealed may be above our comprehension. And when we look into the lively oracles, we see that while the unity of God is every where maintained, it is no less plainly taught, that "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one."

It is not intended to enter upon an elaborate argument in defence of this doctrine. It may serve, however, more fully to satisfy our minds in relation to the validity of the argument drawn from christian baptism, to see that this truth is plainly taught elsewhere throughout the scriptures. I remark, then, that with regard to the divinity of the first person of the Godhead, there is in the christian world no diversity of opinion. That the Father is truly and properly God, all will admit. And if we are willing to take the scriptures as our guide, the proof of the divinity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is not less conclusive. How does it appear that the Father pos-

sesses the glory which is peculiar to divinity? Is it because the oracles of truth ascribe to him those names, titles and attributes, which belong only to Deity? Is it because he is represented as performing the works which no created being can accomplish? Is it because that religious homage is ascribed to him, which it would be idolatry to offer to the most exalted creature? It is readily admitted that these are so many conclusive proofs of the true and proper deity of the Father. But the sacred scriptures furnish the very same arguments in support of the divinity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. They, therefore, are justly chargeable with inconsistency, who, upon the testimony of scripture, admit the divinity of the Father, and yet reject the divinity of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, which is supported by the same authority. Do we believe that the Father is God, because the scriptures ascribe to him those names which are peculiar to deity? For the same reason we must admit the divinity of the Son. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." While the Word, who was made flesh, and dwelt among us, is here expressly called God, the work of creation, which is peculiar to the Deity, is likewise ascribed to him. "By him were all things made, and without him was not any thing made, that was made."* Contrasting the glory of Jesus Christ with that of the angels, the apostle represents the Father as addressing the Son in the following language: "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Is religious worship to be offered to God only? And do the scriptures denounce the

* John, 1: 1, 3.

most fearful maledictions against those who worship any other being? It is, then, the express command of God, that "all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." And when he bringeth the first begotten into the world he saith, "And let all the angels of God worship him."* According to the uniform language of the scriptures, then, though Jesus Christ, as Mediator, humbled himself and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men, yet he is God over all, blessed forever, the Creator of all things, and has a just claim to the same religious homage from angels and from men, which is due unto the Father.

By the same process of reasoning, the divinity of the Holy Spirit may be conclusively established. He is expressly called God; to him the work of creation is ascribed, and to him omniscience and omnipresence, essential perfections of the deity, are attributed. And both in the ordinance of christian baptism and in the apostolic benediction, he is associated with the Father and the Son, as equally the source of blessing to man and the proper object of religious homage. That there are three divine persons in the unity of the Godhead is, then, the doctrine of the sacred scriptures. And while this great truth is plainly taught in baptism, the different persons of the adorable Trinity are, in this ordinance, represented as jointly engaged in the grand work of man's redemption. Believers are "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."†

2. In baptism, we have an impressive representa-

* Heb. 1:6, 8.

† 1 Peter, 1:2.

tion of the doctrine of *human depravity*. In this ordinance, by the command of Christ, water, which is used for the purpose of washing, is applied to the body. The necessity of spiritual cleansing is thereby plainly signified. For, if we were not the subjects of moral defilement; if our nature were not contaminated with sin, cleansing would be unnecessary, and the application of water in baptism would be unmeaning. In this christian institution, then, we have exhibited to our view, in an expressive figure, a truth which is taught every where throughout the sacred volume, which it is greatly important that we should understand and feel, but which the proud heart is very unwilling to admit, namely, that we are guilty before God. Sin, like a leprosy, hath pervaded our whole nature; it is preying upon our very vitals, and unless it is removed we must perish. O sinner! thou hast destroyed thyself! Thy heart is not right with God. He with whom thou hast to do, is of purer eyes than to behold evil; he cannot look on iniquity. But thy conscience is defiled with sin; thy heart is alienated from the life of God; thou art dead in trespasses and sins. And in the ordinance of baptism, you may see that unless your conscience is purged from dead works by the blood of Jesus; or, in other words, unless you are justified through faith in Christ Jesus, you can never appear before God with acceptance. But while baptism, in an expressive figure, represents our guilty condition as sinners, it also teaches,

3. The doctrine of *expiation by the blood of Jesus*. The application of water to the body in baptism, plainly teaches that we need to be washed; while, at the same time, it represents the provision which God has made for the expiation of human

guilt. But the water itself cannot remove the moral defilement of sin. Water may put away the filth of the flesh, may effect the purgation of the body, but cannot remove that moral pollution of the soul, which is the consequence of sin. As used in this ordinance it is only an external sign. That, of which it is the significant emblem, is the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from all sin. The penalty connected with the violation of the divine law, by the great Lawgiver, is death. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." "The wages of sin is death." As a sinner, therefore, man stands exposed to the execution of the penalty of the violated law. And had it been his pleasure, the Sovereign Ruler of the universe might have glorified his justice, in executing the fearful sentence of the law upon every son and daughter of Adam. But God, who is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us, provided a Redeemer, in the person of his own Son. He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all. In accordance with his own voluntary engagement, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that through his poverty we might be rich. And appearing in the character of our substitute, and bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. As death is the wages of sin, therefore without the shedding of blood, there is no remission. Accordingly, he died for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God. And of his atoning blood the water of baptism is the divinely appointed symbol. As water cleanses the body, so we are taught in baptism that Jesus Christ, by the shedding of his blood; or in other words, by his death, hath made expiation for our

sin; and that by faith in his atonement, the chief of sinners may obtain pardon, and be brought to the possession of that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

By the appointment of baptism with water, then, we have presented to our view, in a significant figure, that most interesting truth, that there is forgiveness with God. Here we see with our eyes the evidence of the fact, that a fountain has been opened for sin and for uncleanness, and that God has graciously made ample provision for the removal of our guilt. And hence, in the scriptures, the reception of baptism is urged by this consideration, that in it there is an exhibition of the blessing of remission of sin. "Repent," said Peter, on the day of Pentecost, to the assembled multitude, who, under the power of conviction, inquired, "What must we do?" "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus, *for the remission of sins.*" And when Saul of Tarsus obtained a proper sight of his sin, and was brought an humble suppliant to the feet of Jesus, Ananias is directed to say to him, "Arise and be baptized, *and wash away thy sins.*"

4. In the ordinance of baptism we are also taught the doctrine of regeneration by the Holy Spirit. That such is our spiritual condition before God, as sinful, fallen creatures, that a change of nature must be experienced before we can serve God acceptably here or enjoy him hereafter, is very clearly taught in the oracles of truth. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee," is the declaration of our Lord to Nicodemus, "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." This change is a moral renovation of our nature, so thorough, that he who is the subject of it is a *new creature*. "If any man be in

Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”* Previous to this change, the sinner is dead in trespasses and sins; he walks according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; he has his conversation in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, the end of which things is death. But, in regeneration, he passes from death unto life; he is created in Christ Jesus unto good works; and being thus made free from sin, and having become a servant unto God, his fruit is unto holiness and the end is everlasting life. A work of such a nature, cannot be the result of mere human agency, but must be effected by the power of God. And, accordingly, we are informed, that “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.”† And in the ordinance of baptism, we are taught that this is peculiarly the work of the Holy Spirit. Hence, our Lord declares, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Here a distinction is drawn betwixt the external rite of baptism, and the internal change of which it is significant. To be born of water is, to receive the outward sign of baptism; to be born of the Spirit, is to experience that change of heart which is effected by the agency of the Holy Spirit, the nature and necessity of which are represented by baptism with water. To the same distinction does the apostle appear to refer, when he says, “According to his mercy he saved us,

* 2 Cor. 5 : 17.

† Eph. 2 : 4, 5.

by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.”* In the expression, the washing of regeneration, there seems manifestly to be an allusion to the application of water in baptism. This is the external sign of that change which takes place in the soul in regeneration; which is effected by the renewing of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit, by whom we are renewed, the apostle adds, God hath poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ. As we have already seen, our Lord Jesus Christ, by his atoning blood, redeemed his people from death and procured for them eternal life. And it is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit to take of those gifts which are the purchase of the Redeemer’s death and communicate them to those who are the heirs of salvation. And in the ordinance of baptism, we have, in a figure, a representation of the agency of the Holy Spirit, in applying the benefits of Christ’s death, in the regeneration of those who are the objects of his love.

In this interesting ordinance, then, we have a summary exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel. Under a striking figure we have presented to our view, the mournful truth that our sins have separated between God and our souls, and have hid his face from us, and consequently, that except we be born again, we cannot see the kingdom of God. But truly deplorable as is our condition, we see in this ordinance that there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever be-

* Titus, 3 : 5, 6.

lieveth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. And in connection with the love of the Father, manifested in the gift of his Son, we have an exhibition of the grace of Jesus Christ and of the efficacy of his atoning blood, which cleanseth from all sin. And while we are called to mourn over the alienation of our hearts from God, and the moral pollution of our nature, which disqualifies us for the enjoyment of fellowship with God, we also behold the goodness and condescension of the Holy Spirit, by whose agency we are made partakers of a new nature and become the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. In the name of this triune God, we are baptized; to his service we are solemnly dedicated; and to him we join ourselves in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.

II. What is the nature of the profession which is made in the reception of baptism? It is the more important that we inquire into this matter, since it is to be apprehended that it is overlooked by many, both of those who receive baptism themselves and of those who, in this ordinance, dedicate their children to God. I remark,

1. There is a public profession of our faith in those great doctrines which are taught in this ordinance. To submit to this rite, and yet to disregard or to reject the important truths of which it is significant, and which it is designed to confirm, would be to incur the guilt of profaning a holy ordinance. The leading doctrines of christianity, presented to our view in the language which our Lord employed in the institution of baptism, and, figuratively, by the external symbol of water, which, in this ordinance, is significant of spiritual things, have been

exhibited in the preceding part of this lecture. In the reception of baptism, then, we make a public declaration of our faith in the doctrine of a trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead ; we declare that we believe that there is one God and Father, who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all ; that there is one Divine Redeemer, who laid down his life a ransom for us ; and that there is one Divine Spirit, by whose agency we are created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. We also declare our belief of the truth, that we are naturally dead in trespasses and in sins, and, consequently, that except we experience the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, we cannot see the kingdom of God.

2. In the reception of baptism, we profess our subjection to the authority of God and our dedication to his service. Are we baptized in the *name* of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost? Then, in this act of religious worship, we make a solemn surrender of ourselves to him as our God, who has a just claim to our supreme regard, and promise to love and serve him faithfully. Baptized in the name of the Father, we acknowledge God as our Father, and promise to give to him the love and the homage of dutiful and obedient children. Baptized in the name of the Son, we profess our faith in Jesus Christ as our only Saviour, confess that we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and unite with the apostle in the declaration, "Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Baptized in the name of the Holy Spirit, we confess that we are, by nature, children of

wrath, even as others, and must, consequently, be born of water and of the Spirit, before we can see the kingdom of God. And we solemnly avouch the Lord to be our God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken to his voice.

3. In baptism, we profess that we are under obligations to die unto sin, and to live unto God. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death?" The apostle had just before signified that it was not possible for the christian to live in sin. How shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein? The christian is dead to sin, and this is signified by baptism. In this ordinance we are baptized into the death of Christ. The water of baptism is a significant emblem of that atoning blood which was shed, when he laid down his life a ransom for us. The end for which he offered himself a sacrifice unto God was, that he might save his people from their sins. And in baptism our interest in the benefits of his death is signified. As he died for sin, so, in baptism, we declare that we are dead to sin; that our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

In conclusion, my christian brethren, you see that the profession which we make in this holy ordinance, is one of a most solemn and interesting character. We bear a public testimony to the great doctrines of christianity. We express our gratitude to God, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light, and hath made us partakers of a good hope through grace. And we

say to all around us, that we voluntarily take the yoke of Christ upon us, and that we are resolved, through the grace of God, to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Though we were once strangers and foreigners, now we are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God. We publicly declare, that we are not our own, but that we belong to Him who hath redeemed us to God by his blood; and that, let others do as they may, our purpose is fixed, that we will serve the Lord.

LECTURE II.

THE PROPER SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.

HAVING considered the meaning of the ordinance, and the nature of the profession which is made in the reception of it, our next inquiry is, Who are the proper subjects of baptism? To this inquiry I reply,—

1. All those who make a credible profession of their faith in Christ, are to be regarded by the church as having a right to baptism. Before men can be received into the household of faith, and recognized as the disciples of Christ, they must be instructed in the principles of christianity. And when an individual gives such evidence of his knowledge of the way of salvation and of his experience of the power of religion in his own heart, as will warrant the church to conclude, in the judgment of charity, that he is a true believer in Christ, he has a right to christian baptism. The church, it is true, cannot look into the heart, and therefore she is liable to be deceived in the judgment which she forms of the character of those who desire to enjoy her distinguishing privileges. Still she is responsible to her Lord for the exercise of her authority. And to receive into her fellowship, by baptism, those whose conduct testifies that they are in a state of impenitency, would be a criminal prostitution of a sacred ordinance.

And here let me request you particularly to observe, that with regard to the necessity of faith, as

a qualification for baptism, in so far as all who are capable of exercising faith are concerned, there is no dispute. It is the more necessary that I should direct your attention to this point, because, from the language often employed by baptists, it might be supposed that they are singular in requiring faith preparatory to baptism. It is not uncommon to hear them say, that they hold the doctrine of "Believer baptism;" as though they were peculiar in requiring evidence of a man's faith previous to baptism. In the case of adults, who are brought out of the world and introduced into the church, we believe, according to the scriptures, that they must be carefully instructed in the doctrines of the gospel, and that they must give satisfactory evidence of their faith in Christ, before they can, with propriety, be admitted to membership in the church by baptism. In all such cases, we say to him who desires baptism, as Philip said to the Ethiopian eunuch, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." It is, therefore, unnecessary labor, on the part of our baptist brethren, to collect quotations from the scriptures to prove the necessity of faith and repentance previous to baptism. Such scriptural quotations prove nothing in opposition to the doctrine which we have received, but establish a principle which we hold as firmly, and to which we attach as much importance as they do themselves. Is it then ingenuous, or does it comport with that simplicity which is the ornament of the christian character, to adduce the multiplied passages of scripture, which speak of teaching, of faith and of repentance, in connection with baptism, and then claim these as proofs of the point in dispute? All these texts, which are very numerous, establish conclusively a doctrine which

we hold in common with themselves; but they decide nothing at all in regard to the matter in controversy. We do not call for proof that adults are to be taught, and that they must give evidence that they are believers, before they can be admitted to baptism. All this the scriptures clearly teach, and we most firmly believe.

How preposterous, then, is it for our friends to claim some hundred texts of this character, as though they were conclusive on their side of the controversy, when, in reality, they establish simply that which no one denies. But when they have labored to establish a position, of the correctness of which no one concerned in the present controversy needs proof, that is, that adults are first to be instructed in the principles of the gospel before they can, with propriety, be baptized; and then infer, from premises which we admit to be solid, that the infants of believers have no right to baptism; it is to the inference that we object. Between the premises and the conclusion there is an impassable gulf. The conclusion embraces a class of persons not included in the premises. The distinctive position of our brethren is, that none except those who are capable of being taught, and who believe in Christ, are proper subjects of baptism. But not one of all the numerous texts to which they refer, establish such a conclusion. They prove simply what all admit, that those who have attained to the age of reflection, who are the only persons that can be taught, must first be instructed, and give evidence of their faith, before they can have a right to baptism.

But will any one maintain that the declaration of our Lord, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," authorizes the conclusion that none except

such as are capable of believing are proper subjects of baptism, and that, therefore, infants are excluded ? I reply, that such a conclusion is not legitimate ; and should we adopt this principle of reasoning, it would lead to consequences of the most revolting character. Let us subject it to the test of examination. The language of our Lord is, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." The inference which the baptist draws from this language is, that since infants cannot believe, therefore, they should not be baptized. If this inference is valid, let us see to what results it will lead. Our Lord further declares, "he that believeth not shall be damned." Apply the mode of reasoning which we are examining, to this declaration. Infants are not capable of believing; therefore all infants shall be damned! I am aware that our brethren would shudder at the thought of adopting such an impious conclusion. I am far from imputing to them a sentiment so abhorrent. But I do most explicitly charge this conclusion to the account of that inconsequential mode of reasoning, by which they would cut off our children from an interest in the seal of God's covenant.

That it may more fully appear, that the method of reasoning which is employed for the purpose of making this declaration of our Lord exclude infants from a right to baptism, is not conclusive, but fallacious, let us try it in another case. In his epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul, the apostle, says, "When we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat."* Now suppose we should reason from this passage of scripture, precisely in the same manner as our

friends would argue, in opposition to the right of infant baptism, from the declaration of our Lord, to which we have referred, to what conclusion should we be conducted? We might reason thus: infants cannot work; therefore, they may not eat! And, according to this manner of reasoning, the authority of the apostle might be pleaded in support of the monstrous doctrine, that infants who cannot labor for a subsistence must be left to starve.

But, perhaps, some one will say, that common sense would teach us that the apostle has reference to the case of adults, who are capable of laboring. I admit it. And the same instructor would teach us, that when our Lord speaks of believing, in connection with being baptized, he has reference to those who are capable of believing. The plain and obvious truth is, that neither the declaration of our Lord nor that of the apostle, has any reference to the case of infants, and, consequently, determines nothing in relation to them. Such expressions as these, "He that believeth and is baptized;" "Repent and be baptized;" it is admitted, do not afford any evidence of the right of infant baptism; and it is equally plain, that they furnish no argument against it. They say nothing whatever in relation to infants. And, therefore, from other parts of the oracles of truth, which relate to the case of infants, we must learn what is the will of God respecting them.

It is, then, perfectly nugatory, on the part of our brethren, to refer us to the commission given to the apostles, "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them," as though this furnished an argument against the doctrine which we hold. We maintain, not less firmly than they, that men must be taught, and must experience the power of the truth, before they

are baptized. And we appeal to our practice as evidence, that we are not less careful in attending to this matter than they are themselves. It throws no difficulty in our way to tell us, that the apostles taught men to "repent and be baptized;" that faith in Christ was required of the Ethiopian eunuch, of the Philippian jailer, of Lydia and others, before they were baptized. In similar circumstances we teach and require the same. We exhort men to believe and turn to God; and we require evidence of their faith and repentance as a qualification for baptism. But what have these and similar examples, recorded in scripture, to do with the question relative to the right of infants? They decide nothing for nor against the right of infants, because they have no reference to the case of infants. And therefore, as every thing is not taught in any one particular portion of sacred scripture, we must learn from other parts of the Bible, where the divine will, on this subject, is revealed, what provision the God of love and grace has made for our offspring.

Let me then request you particularly, to bear in mind, that, with regard to adults, there is no dispute. That they must believe, before they can have a right to baptism, all agree. The point at issue is simply this: have the infants of believers a right to christian baptism? This is the question; and here our brethren deny, and we affirm. And in support of the affirmative,

1. My first argument is drawn from the fact, that the infants of believers were, under the former dispensation, constituted members of the visible church of God. That there was a visible church in the world, previous to the introduction of the gospel dispensation, will not be denied by any with whom

we are concerned in the present controversy. Of the relation between God and his church, circumcision was the appointed sign. As an evidence that the children of believers, were recognized by the God of Abraham, as belonging to his church, it was the divine appointment that they should receive the sign of circumcision. The conclusion then is, that infants are still members of the visible church and entitled to the appointed sign of membership, whatever it may be, unless it can be made to appear, that God, by a positive enactment, has excluded them. Baptism, it will be admitted, is now the appointed sign of connection with the visible church; and, consequently, to this sign the infants of believers have a right. If any one should deny this right, he is bound to show that God has cut off the children of his people from his church, with which they were once connected, and has recalled a distinguished grant, which he once conferred. Let, then, authority be produced from the New Testament, to show that God himself has dissolved that connection between his church and the children of believers which he established. But not only cannot such authority be produced, but the very supposition that such is the present condition of the children of believers, would involve the absurdity, that, under the benignant reign of the Prince of Peace, the privileges of the church, instead of being enlarged, have been, in a most important respect, seriously diminished.

But, for your further satisfaction, let us examine a little more particularly the evidence of the position that the infants of believers were, by divine appointment, constituted members of the visible church.

At a time when the earth generally was overrun with the abominations of idolatry, it was the good

pleasure of God, to give to Abraham a revelation of his will and to establish a covenant with him. This covenant comprehended not only temporal favors, but likewise important spiritual blessings and privileges. Not only did God assure the patriarch that he would make of him a great nation, and that his seed should inherit the land of Canaan, but he moreover declared, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee."* Here is a covenant established between God on the one part, and Abraham and his seed on the other. The seed of Abraham, here spoken of, are not so particularly his natural descendants, as true believers in every age, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. Accordingly the apostle declares, that Abraham is the father of "all them that believe, though they be not circumcised." And further, it is said, "To the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that, also, which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations."† It is, then, perfectly plain, that the seed of Abraham, spoken of in this covenant, comprehend all true believers of every age and nation. And, consequently, the promise, "I will be a God to thee and thy seed," is just as sure to the believer and his seed now, as it was originally to Abraham and his natural seed.

By this covenant, established with the father of the faithful, the family of Abraham were separated from the world, and were taken into a peculiar

* Gen. 17:7.

† Rom. 4:16, 17.

relation to God, so that they became his people and he became their God. From this time, down to the period of the incarnation and death of Him who is the desire of all nations, the visible church was preserved among the descendants of Abraham. They constituted a society separated from the surrounding world, whom God recognized as his people and to whom he committed the lively oracles and the ordinances of salvation. With reference to the distinction conferred upon the seed of Abraham, the royal prophet exclaims, "What one nation in the earth is like thy people Israel; for thy people Israel didst thou make thine own people for ever, and thou, Lord, becamest their God."*

This society, distinguished from the world and taken into a peculiar relation to God, is, in the Old Testament, more commonly designated the "congregation of the Lord, and in the New Testament, the "church of God." Of this ecclesiastical community, comprehending God's people, infants were, by the express appointment of heaven, constituted members. According to the tenor of the covenant, established with him who is the Father of all them that believe, God declares, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee." In connection with the establishment of this gracious covenant with Abraham, God was pleased to appoint a visible sign or token of the relation into which he and his seed were taken. The divine declaration is, "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised." "It shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you."† Here then it

* 1 Chron. 17:22.

† Gen. 17:10, 11.

is plain, that the infant seed of Abraham were taken into a peculiar relation to God as their God, along with their father, and that, by divine appointment, they had a right to circumcision, which was then the sign or token of God's covenant with his people. And from this time, down to the actual appearance of that illustrious seed who was promised to Abraham, and of whom it is said, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," we find among the posterity of Abraham, a religious community composed of those who acknowledged God, obeyed his laws and worshiped him according to the divine appointment. And of this community, which was the visible church of God, the infants of God's people were members. If, then, the infants of believers were, by divine appointment, members of the visible church once, and had a right to the appointed sign of membership, the conclusion is irresistible, that they still enjoy this right, unless God, who at first conferred it, has thought proper to deprive them of it. If he has, we call for the evidence. It is a privilege too dear to our hearts, as parents, to surrender it on any authority short of that which is divine.

But let it for a moment be supposed, that this right has been taken away, and that, under the gospel dispensation, the infants of God's people are cut off from all connection with his church; to what result would this supposition lead? Why, plainly, this: that the church of Christ, instead of advancing, has, by the coming of the Messiah, lost a most precious privilege. In the morning of her existence, when she was under a dispensation of shadows and carnal ordinances, the church could rejoice in the covenant of her God, which assured her, "I will be

a God to thee and to thy seed." And while she sat down in safety, under the wings of the divine Majesty, it was her comfort to know that her children were under the protection of the God of Abraham, and were partakers of the seal of his covenant. But now, according to the principle which denies the right of infant baptism, since the introduction of that glorious period in the history of the church which many prophets and righteous men desired to see; that time, when the church was taught by her inspired prophets to look for a great increase of light, and enlargement of her privileges, the church is left to mourn over the loss which her children have sustained, by being cast out of her pale, and excluded from all interest in the seal of God's covenant! Can this be a principle of the bible? Impossible!

The validity of the conclusion at which we have arrived, is in no degree impaired by the fact, that a change has been made in the external sign of the relation between God and his church, under the gospel dispensation. He, who, at first appointed circumcision to be the sign of his covenant with his people and their seed, has abolished that rite and has ordained baptism in its stead. But this change in the sign of the covenant, argues nothing against the interest of infants in it. There is, evidently, nothing in the rite of baptism itself, which would render its application to infants more unsuitable than the application of circumcision. Not only so, but it is a rite which is more correspondent with the milder genius of the gospel dispensation. The change in the appointed sign of God's covenant with his church is, consequently, such an one as we are prepared to expect. If, therefore, God's covenant

with his church still abides; if he is now as truly as he ever was, our God and the God of our seed, our children now have the same right which they formerly had, to the external sign of their interest in the blessings of his covenant.

And while the argument in favor of the right of infants to baptism, is not weakened by the fact, that a change has been made in the external sign of the covenant, it is greatly strengthened by the consideration, that whatever change may have taken place, as to external administration, the church is still the same. She has been greatly enlarged; the middle wall formerly existing between Jew and Gentile, has been broken down; and some change has been made in her external form, and in the ordinances of religious worship given to her; but still the church herself exists unchanged. In the establishment of this position, it may be observed,

(1.) That there are many important promises made to the church, under the former dispensation, which were not fulfilled until after the introduction of the gospel dispensation. If, then, the identity of the church, under the two dispensations, be rejected, these promises must have failed in their accomplishment. But such a conclusion no christian will admit. Among the numerous examples which might be adduced, the following deserve attention: Zion, the church of God, is comforted by the assurance, "The glory of the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, and the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee."* It is here

* Isaiah, 60 : 3, 5.

promised to the church, that her numbers should be greatly increased by the accession of the Gentiles. But this promise was not fulfilled until the Holy Spirit was poured out from on high, and the gospel was preached with success among the Gentile nations. In truth, it is only in the progress of fulfilment at the present time. And hence, it is manifest that the church, now in existence, however much she may have been enlarged by the introduction of the Gentiles, is, nevertheless, the same identical society to which the promise was originally made.

(2.) The same conclusion is confirmed, by the language which the apostle employs, in describing the excision of the unbelieving Jews, and the consequent introduction into the church of the believing Gentiles. "If some of the branches be broken off, and thou being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree, boast not against the branches."* In this passage of scripture, the Jewish church is represented by the similitude of a good olive tree, while the Gentiles are compared to a wild olive tree. The unbelieving Jews, who rejected the Messiah promised to the fathers, and were consequently excluded from the privileges of the visible church, are described as unfruitful branches which were broken off from the good olive tree. The olive tree was not, however, destroyed. Some of the branches, only, were broken off. And while the tree was deprived of some of its natural branches, many of the Gentiles, who are represented by the similitude of a wild olive tree, believed in Christ,

* Romans, 11 : 17.

and were grafted into the good olive tree. When, therefore, the gospel was preached with efficacy among the Gentiles, and many of them turned from dumb idols to serve the living God, and became members of the household of faith, there was no new church established. They who had not been the people of God, now became his people; they who were once strangers and foreigners, now became fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.

But what was the fact in relation to the Jews, who are the natural branches, before they were broken off? Both they and their children were connected with the church of God. And when the Gentiles were introduced into the church, in the room of the unbelieving Jews, who were cast out, think you that their children were denied that important privilege, which the offspring of the Jews had previously enjoyed? When these branches were taken from their wild stock, and grafted into the good olive tree, do you suppose that they were stripped of their tender buds? No! it cannot be. But, as under the former dispensation, when a Gentile parent renounced idolatry, and embraced the religion of the God of Abraham, he and his offspring were admitted into the church by circumcision; so now, the token of God's covenant being changed, when he makes a profession of his faith in Christ, he and his children are received into the same church by baptism.

But the apostle informs us, that at some future time, the descendants of Abraham, shall again be grafted into their own good olive, from which the mass of the nation had, for their unbelief, been broken off. "And they also, if they abide not in

unbelief, shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again." "Blindness, in part, is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved."* It is, then, a pleasing truth, that there is yet mercy in store for the Jewish nation. At some future period, that blindness, which has fallen upon the mass of the nation, shall be removed, and, in the figurative language of the apostle, "the branches which were broken off, shall again be grafted into their own olive tree." And when these long lost sons of Abraham, shall be converted to the faith of the gospel, and shall embrace the Messiah whom their fathers rejected, and shall be re-admitted into that one body composed of Jews and Gentiles, are they introduced into a new church? Nothing like it! They are again grafted into their own good olive tree; or, in plain language, they are re-admitted into the same church from which their unbelieving ancestors had been excluded. The church, under the gospel, is then the same society which existed in the days of Abraham, though greatly enlarged, and as to her external form, considerably changed.

What, then, shall be the condition of the church, when the Deliverer shall come out of Zion and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob? When the posterity of Abraham, who are beloved for the fathers' sakes, shall again be brought into the church, what shall be the fate of their little ones? In the covenant established with their venerable ancestor, they were regarded with favor, and were jointly with their parents partakers of the sign of God's covenant. And what is their condition under

* Romans, 11 : 23—26.

the gracious and benignant dispensation of the gospel? Is the God of Abraham no longer the God of his people's seed? Are the children of believers entirely overlooked by the gospel, and left with the world which lieth in wickedness? 'Think you, that the Jews could ever be persuaded to come into the church on such terms? In the covenant made with their father Abraham, God had not only taken the parent, but likewise his offspring, into a special relation to himself as his people, and had appointed a sign of this relation, of which the parent and his children were jointly partakers. And the sacred writings, every where authorized the Jews to expect, under the reign of Messiah, a great enlargement of their privileges. And is this the way in which their privileges were to be enlarged? Were their children to be cut off from all connection with the visible church? No! It cannot be. "They are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them." And when the veil of unbelief shall be removed from their hearts, and they shall come and take upon them the yoke of Christ, by receiving baptism, they shall not be subjected to the painful necessity of leaving their children behind them; for he who said to Abraham, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee," says to all under the gospel dispensation, "The promise is to you and to your children."

But it may be inquired, what connection has circumcision with a controversy relative to christian baptism? I reply, the connection between the two subjects is not more manifest than it is important. We are contending not for words or names, but for principles. We know that the children of believers were once connected with the church of God, and

were interested in the sign of God's covenant with his people. Circumcision, under the former dispensation, was that sign. From the days of Abraham until the introduction of the gospel dispensation, when any one renounced his connection with the unbelieving world, and embraced the religion of the God of Abraham, the God of Abraham became his God, and he received circumcision, as a token of his new relation to God. Circumcision then, was the appointed sign of his union with the church of God and of his interest in her distinguished privileges. And when the parent received this sign of God's covenant with his people, his children likewise were partakers of it. This is the principle which is clearly established by what has been said respecting circumcision; and this principle is of great importance in determining the point in controversy. It is, however, admitted by all, that circumcision is now abolished; but the relation between God and his people is not abolished. He is still their God and the God of their seed. And while this interesting relation between God and his people still continues, though one sign of this relation has been abolished, another has been appointed. He who appointed circumcision to be the sign of his covenant under the former dispensation, has, under the milder dispensation of the gospel, appointed baptism. When an individual comes out from the world and embraces the religion of Jesus Christ, his connection with the church of God is recognised by baptism. Since then, when a parent connected himself with the church of God and received circumcision, his children were regarded as being interested in the privileges of the church and likewise received circumcision, it follows that when a parent embraces christianity and receives baptism,

and is thus acknowledged a member of the household of God, his children also, are to be regarded as standing in the same relation to the visible church, and have a right to baptism.

But that the correctness of the conclusion may more fully appear, that baptism now occupies the same place in the ordinances of the church which was formerly occupied by circumcision, and, consequently, that infants are as proper subjects of the one as the other, it may be of advantage to attend to some of the leading points of coincidence between these two institutions.

1. They are alike divinely appointed *initiatory rites* of the church of God. This point of agreement between these ordinances must be apparent to all who have any knowledge of the scriptures. We have already had occasion to remark, that when God was pleased to take Abraham and his seed into a covenant relation to him, as his visible church, it was by circumcision. From this time forth, when a Gentile wished to become a member of this sacred society, and enter into the congregation of the Lord, he was received by circumcision. No uncircumcised person could be regarded as a member of the community of God's Israel, nor was he permitted to eat the passover. And that it is by baptism we are now introduced into the christian church, none will deny. On the day of Pentecost, the sacred historian informs us, about three thousand persons were added to the church; and by baptism they were introduced into the fellowship of the household of God; and henceforward, when any one would withdraw from connection with the world which lieth in wickedness, and would join himself to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, he was by baptism admitted to the fellowship of the church.

It has already been proved by plain scripture authority, that the church now is the same sacred society which existed under the legal dispensation. Circumcision and baptism, it appears, agree in this, that they are initiatory rites of the church. When baptism was instituted as the initiatory rite under the gospel, circumcision was abolished. Therefore its place in the ordinances of the church has been supplied by baptism. But the infants of believers were, by God's appointment, circumcised; therefore, under the present dispensation of the church, the infants of God's people are proper subjects of baptism.

2. The signification of these two ordinances is substantially the same. It is customary with a certain class of writers to represent circumcision as an institution of inferior importance, and as having reference to privileges of a merely temporal nature. It should be remembered, however, that all divine ordinances derive their importance from the authority of God, who appoints them. Their meaning and their value are not to be determined by the reason of man, but by the authority of God. Human wisdom has always accounted the preaching of the cross foolishness; and it pronounces a similar decision in relation to the ordinances of religion generally. "But the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." The depravity of the human heart may look with contempt upon the rite of circumcision, but, nevertheless, it was an institution dear to the faithful sons of Abraham, because it was the divinely appointed token of God's covenant with them and their seed. And to give us a correct idea of the importance and significance of this ordinance the apostle says, "Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness

of faith." Any one who has read with attention the epistle to the Romans, will have remarked that the "*righteousness of faith*" is that comprehensive blessing which it is the glory of the gospel fully to reveal. "But now the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe."* The righteousness of faith, or, in other words, the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is received by faith, is the only ground of pardon and acceptance with God for the sinner. And though this blessing is more fully revealed now than it was under the former dispensation, yet, let it not be supposed that Abraham was ignorant of it. The apostle informs us "That the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."† Abraham, then, was made acquainted with the gospel, and circumcision was to him a sign and seal of that righteousness of faith which he embraced as the ground on which he was justified before God. Baptism is now the significant seal of the same invaluable blessing. And hence such language as the following is commonly employed in reference to this ordinance: "Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, *for the remission of sins.*" But remission of sins, can be obtained by a sinner only through the propitiation of Jesus Christ. And hence the following declaration of the apostle: "Being justified freely through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; whom

* Romans 3:21, 22.

† Romans 3: 24—26.

God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.* These two institutions, then, agree in this important respect, that, in them both, we have a representation of the way of justification through faith in the righteousness of our divine Surety.

But further: they are both significant of the necessity of a change of heart, and are the divinely appointed means of sanctification. Circumcision, it is true, was an outward rite applied to the body; but it signified, by an outward symbol, the removal of moral pollution, and it pointed to the renovation of the heart, which is effected by the Holy Spirit. And hence the following interesting promise, which explains the spiritual import of this rite: "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul."† And Moses exhorts the Israelites to put away their sins and turn to the Lord, in the following language: "Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked." It is then perfectly plain that circumcision had a spiritual meaning, was significant of spiritual blessings, and that it pointed to the moral renovation of the heart. The correctness of this position is made still further manifest by the language of the apostle: "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision

*Romans, 3:24—26.

†Deut. 30:6, and 10:16.

is, that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter.”* Here, you see, the apostle distinguishes between *outward circumcision* and the circumcision of *the heart*; circumcision in *the letter*, and circumcision in *the spirit*. This language would be wholly unmeaning, on any other principle, than that for which we contend, that the outward rite is significant of an inward grace.

How utterly irreconcilable with the scriptures: and may I not say, how irreverent is it, to lower the importance of this sacred rite, and to represent it as a mere political badge, by which the descendants of Abraham were distinguished from other nations? While it was, indeed, an outward rite applied to the body, it had a most interesting spiritual meaning. From the oracles of truth we know that it was significant of a moral renovation of our nature and of the implantation of gracious affections in the soul.

The very same things are signified, only in a clearer manner, correspondent with a dispensation of greater light, by christian baptism. Accordingly, an apostle informs us, that, “Baptism doth also save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”† It is just as true of baptism as of circumcision, that it is an outward rite. And it is as true of the one ordinance as of the other, that that which is outward in the flesh, is, comparatively, not worthy of the name. And the apostle here points to the important distinction between the baptism of the body with water, and that of the heart, which is effected by the Holy Spirit. Water, in baptism, is applied to the body; and all that water

* Rom. 2:28, 29.

† 1 Peter 3:21.

can accomplish is, the removal of the "filth of the flesh." But the external baptism, with water, is emblematic of the baptism of the Spirit, by which a change of heart is effected, and holiness of life is produced. Baptism saves, then, not by any cleansing efficacy which the water possesses, but as it is the divinely appointed means of producing a "good conscience:" that is, a conscience purged from dead works by the blood of Jesus, and purified from the pollution of sin, to serve the living God. These two institutions, then, plainly agree, in that they are alike the divinely appointed means of promoting the sanctification of the soul; and, consequently, no sufficient reason can be assigned to show that the infants of believers are not proper subjects of the one ordinance as well as of the other.

Since, then, circumcision and baptism agree, in that they are the divinely appointed rites of admission into the church of God; since they both represent the way of pardon and acceptance with God, through the righteousness of Christ: since they both signify the necessity of a new heart, and are at the same time the means of promoting internal holiness: and since, as all admit, circumcision is now abolished, the conclusion is irresistible, that baptism has supplied its place. But the infants of believers were proper subjects of circumcision; therefore they have a right to baptism.

It does not, in any degree, militate against the justness of this conclusion, that there are some circumstantial differences between these two ordinances. For example: circumcision was restricted to males; whereas male and female alike have an interest in baptism. For reasons not particularly revealed, a distinction was made between the sexes, under the

former dispensation, and the rite of initiation into the church was confined to males. In the Jewish church the females were represented by the males, and the latter only, were circumcised; but being represented by the males, they were regarded as virtually, though not really, circumcised. And hence females, as well as males, partook of the passover, from which every uncircumcised person was, by the law, interdicted. But, under the present dispensation, this distinction between the sexes no longer exists; for we are expressly told, that in Christ Jesus, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is *neither male nor female*; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

But further: that baptism is christian circumcision, and has taken the place of the institution given to Abraham, appears with conclusive evidence from the language of the apostle: “Ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power; in whom also, ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”† This passage, you may observe, confirms the truth of what we have already said with regard to the spiritual import of circumcision. Here is a “circumcision made without hands;” that is, effected by divine power, in opposition to that which is performed by man. And as to the spiritual meaning of the outward rite, it is significant of the “putting off the body of the sins of the flesh.” The apostle in this

* Galatians 3:28.

† Colos. 2:10—12.

passage exhorts the Colossians to adhere stedfastly to the gospel of Christ in opposition to those false teachers who would lead them to incorporate with christianity the principles of a vain philosophy or of Jewish traditions. And an argument is drawn from the fullness of grace that is in Christ: "Ye are complete in him." United to Christ by a living faith, the christian is complete: he is made a partaker of every thing that is necessary to his justification, sanctification and preservation to eternal glory. He needs not the help of the legal ceremonies for which some false teachers were so zealous. Why should he submit to circumcision in accordance with the demand of those who corrupted the gospel by teaching, "Except ye be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, ye cannot be saved?" Circumcision is no longer an ordinance to be observed in the church. That, however, of which circumcision was significant, is more clearly represented by baptism, of which the Colossians had been made partakers on their profession of Christianity.

From the connection in which circumcision and baptism are here introduced by the apostle, and from the exact correspondence between them as to their spiritual import as here exhibited, we are shut up to the conclusion that, according to the apostle, baptism is the christian circumcision. Look for a moment at the exact agreement of these two institutions, as to their spiritual import:

1. Circumcision is significant of a spiritual change. In Christ you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands. The outward rite of circumcision was performed by the hand of man: but this outward rite was significant of the circumcision of the heart, which is performed by the power of the

Holy Spirit. The true believer is a partaker of this spiritual circumcision, which results in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh; or, in other words, which teaches him to mortify the flesh, with the affections and lusts, and to live unto God. This may with propriety be termed the circumcision of Christ; because, though the necessity of it was signified by the external rite under the law, it is in reality produced only by the spirit of Christ.

2. In the next place the apostle introduces baptism as significant of the same thing. Baptism represents our interest in those spiritual benefits procured by the death and resurrection of Christ; and to signify our union to Christ and interest in the benefits of redemption, as represented in baptism, we are said to be buried with him in baptism, and to be risen together with him. In other words, baptism is significant of our death to sin, and of our entrance upon a new life. It is not the mode according to which baptism is administered, but baptism itself, which signifies our interest in the blessings procured by the death of Christ. As Christ died for the expiation of our sin, so by virtue of our union to him, and interest in his death, we are redeemed from all iniquity, and are enabled to die unto sin; and as he arose from the dead to die no more, so we, in him, rise from a state of death in sin, and enter upon a new life of holiness, which shall never end. And of our participation of the benefits of his death and resurrection, baptism is, under the gospel, an appointed sign. Since, then, circumcision and baptism agree in their spiritual import, and since circumcision has vanished away, we conclude that baptism has supplied its place; and as the infants of God's people had a right to circumcision, under the law, much more have they, under the gospel, a right to baptism.

LECTURE III.

SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM, CONTINUED.

FROM the view which has been taken of the constitution and privileges of the church, under the former dispensation, it appears that, from her first existence as a society separated from the world, and in visible covenant with God, the infants of believers were, by the express appointment of God, members of this sacred community, and had a right to the instituted sign of connection with it. Such, beyond dispute, was the relation which the children of God's people sustained to the church, previous to the introduction of the gospel dispensation. And will any one maintain, that under the reign of Messiah, our children are excluded from the visible church, and have no right to the appointed sign of the relation subsisting between God and his people? He who would rob us of a privilege so dear to the heart of a christian parent, is under obligations to show, from the language of the New Testament, that God has cut off our children from his church, and that he has deprived them of an important privilege which his benignity once conferred upon them.

It is therefore altogether unreasonable to demand positive and express proof from the New Testament, to show that the children of believers are connected with the church of Christ; or which amounts to the same thing, that they have a right to baptism. This demand is unreasonable; because the scriptures of the Old Testament are the word of God and the rule

of faith, as well as those of the New Testament. And as we have already seen, the children of believers were connected with the church of God under the former dispensation. It has also been demonstrated that the change of dispensation which has taken place has not affected the identity of the church. If, then, the church still remains the same, and if infants were members of the church under the former dispensation, it follows, as a necessary consequence, that they are still connected with the church under the gospel, unless it can be made appear that they are now excluded by Him who formerly conferred on them that privilege. I repeat it then, that on those who deny the right of infant baptism devolves the obligation to prove, from the express language of the New Testament, that God has dissolved the connection which he himself established between His church and the children of His people. But in vain do we call for such proof. Nothing like it can be produced. In truth, as has already been observed, the very supposition that this inestimable privilege has been taken away, under the gospel, involves an absurdity. It would be to suppose that there has been a serious diminution, instead of an enlargement of the privileges of the church under the gospel.

But though I have said that, to demand positive and express authority for infant baptism from the New Testament is unreasonable, I am not to be understood as intimating that there is any difficulty in producing from the New Testament satisfactory proof of the right of infant baptism. I therefore proceed now to the examination of the New Testament, and hope to make it appear that our Lord and his apostles distinctly recognize the membership of

the children of believers in the visible church, and, consequently, their right to christian baptism.

1. My first argument, in support of the right of infant baptism, is founded upon that doctrine of the New Testament which maintains that believers in Christ are the seed of Abraham. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise."* In the covenant made with Abraham, God declares, "A father of many nations have I made thee." By virtue of this covenant, the apostle informs us, Abraham is "the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised." Between the father of the faithful, and all those among the Gentile nations who believe in Christ, there is then a relation of much greater importance than that which subsists between him and those who are merely his natural descendants. They are heirs, according to the promise, to those spiritual blessings and privileges which were secured to Abraham. What then was the privilege conferred upon our venerable father? God, in the plenitude of his grace, established with him a covenant, in which he declared to him, "I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Abraham and his natural seed, then were taken into covenant with God, and by divine appointment had a right to circumcision which was the external sign of the relation into which they were introduced. Are then believers in Christ, under the gospel, the spiritual seed of Abraham, and are they, notwithstanding, cut off from the enjoyment of a privilege which his natural seed enjoyed under the law? No! It cannot be. Whether the external sign of the relation between believers and

* Galatians 3 : 29.

the God of Abraham, is now the same which was originally appointed or not, is a matter wholly unimportant to our argument. If believers in Christ are the seed of Abraham, then the God of Abraham is their God, and the God of their seed. The relation which they and their seed sustain to God, is the same into which Abraham and his seed were originally taken: and the relation being the same, the seed of believers now, have equally with the natural offspring of Abraham, a right to the appointed sign of this covenant relation. Circumcision, which was formerly the appointed sign of this relation, it will be admitted, is now abolished, while baptism has supplied its place. They who are Christ's, then, being Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise, it is just as true of them, as it was of Abraham of old, that God is their God and the God of their seed; and, consequently, their children have a right to baptism, which is now the sign of this relation.

2. That the children of believers are proper subjects of baptism, appears from the declaration of our Lord to those parents who brought their offspring to him to receive his blessing: "Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."* That the persons brought to our Lord on this occasion were literally infants, is abundantly manifest. They are not only called "little children" and "infants," but it is said that our Lord "took them up in his arms." However imperfect the knowledge of these parents may have been, it is evident that they believed in Christ; and hence it was their desire that their children should enjoy his blessing. The question is sometimes asked by the opponents of infant baptism, "What possible

* Matthew 19 : 14.

advantage can an infant derive from being dedicated to God in baptism? It cannot understand any thing about the nature of this ordinance; and what profit can it derive from being baptized?" These parents seem to have had no difficulty in believing that their children might derive important advantage from being brought to Christ. And how did our divine Redeemer receive them? Did he regard their pious wishes with indifference? Did he say to them, "your children cannot understand what I say; take them away; and when they shall have come to years of reflection, let them come themselves, and obtain my blessing?" No! But in the most kind and condescending manner our Lord encourages these parents to come, assuring them, that "*of such is the kingdom of heaven.*" By the phrase, the kingdom of heaven, as employed in the New Testament, is usually to be understood the visible church, which is the kingdom of Christ on earth. Accordingly our Lord compares the kingdom of heaven to a field in which tares appeared among the wheat; and to a net cast into the sea, which enclosed fish of every kind. Under these similitudes the visible church is presented to our view, as comprehending in the present state of imperfection, along with true believers, hypocrites and formalists, who have a form of godliness, while they are destitute of its power. And again it is said, that "many shall come from the east and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out."* It is evident that this declaration cannot refer to the kingdom of glory above, for none who are admitted

* Matthew 8; 11, 12.

into that kingdom shall ever be cast out. It is applicable only to the visible church from which the descendants of Abraham were excluded, on account of their unbelief, and into which the believing Gentiles were introduced. And here it may be remarked we have another plain proof of the identity of the Jewish and christian church. They who are introduced into the kingdom of heaven from the east and from the west, enter into the same society of which the believing patriarchs were members. They sit down in the kingdom of heaven with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Such then being the import of the phrase, "*the Kingdom of Heaven*," the doctrine taught in our Lord's address to these parents is, that such little children have a right to membership in his visible church, and consequently, are proper subjects of baptism, which is the initiatory rite of the christian church. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." It is true that the subject of baptism is not mentioned in this passage, nor is there any thing here said with regard to their right to this seal of God's covenant. But the proof is not on that account the less conclusive. A principle is here established, from which the right of infant baptism is a necessary and legitimate conclusion. Our Lord plainly declares that the kingdom of heaven, or visible church, is composed of such little children. But how is any one introduced into connection with the church of Christ and recognised as a member of that society? It is by baptism. If, therefore, the little children of believing parents may be members of the visible church of Christ, they are proper subjects of baptism which is the appointed sign of membership in the church.

2. As it thus plainly appears that during the pe-

riod of his personal ministry on earth, our blessed Lord distinctly recognised little children as proper subjects of his kingdom, let us proceed to inquire what is the doctrine which was taught by his apostles after they were endued with power from on high, by the abundant effusion of the Holy Spirit. And if I am not mistaken, the doctrine for which we plead, is taught in the first apostolic sermon which was preached after this memorable event took place. On the day of Pentecost, many of the Jews who were present in Jerusalem, were awakened under the powerful preaching of the apostle Peter. And under deep and pungent conviction of sin, they inquired, "What must we do?" Then Peter said unto them, "repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is *unto you and to your children*, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."* To understand the import, as well as to perceive the force of a declaration, it is of importance to keep in view, the speaker, the person addressed, and the occasion on which the declaration was uttered. The persons to whom these words were addressed, were the descendants of faithful Abraham, among whose distinguished privileges this is particularly mentioned as one, that unto them pertained *the promises*. They were the children of the covenant, who knew that peculiar privileges had been secured to them in the covenant which God had made with their venerable ancestor. They were well acquainted with the precious promise made to the father of the faithful; "I will be a God unto thee

* Acts 2:38, 39.

and to thy seed after thee;" and they were perfectly familiar with the fact, that from the days of Abraham the children of believers had been recognised as members of the church of God, together with their parents, and were regarded as proper subjects of circumcision. They knew that it had been promised to their fathers; "They shall be my people and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart and one way that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them and of their children after them."* "And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they and their children, and their children's children for ever; and my servant David shall be their prince for ever."† Those whom the apostle addressed on this occasion were familiar with the privileges of the Jewish church, and with the promises made to their fathers. But they were as yet unacquainted with the peculiarities of the new dispensation. They would not, however, apprehend any diminution of their privileges under the reign of him who was the desire of all nations: and being burdened with a sense of their guilt in crucifying the Lord of glory, and being fully convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was the true Messiah, they desired to be instructed in relation to their duty. The apostle directs them to repent and look unto Jesus, whom they crucified, for the pardon of their sins; and as an expression of their faith in the Saviour, to be baptized in his name. And for their encouragement, he adds, *the promise is unto you*. To what promise does the apostle here direct the hopes of these anxious inquirers after the

* Jeremiah 32:38, 39.

† Ezekiel 37:25.

way of pardon and acceptance with God? It cannot be to the promise of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit merely, for these are not necessarily connected with the pardon of sin. Some have been made partakers of these, who were yet in their sins. These anxious inquirers were burdened with a sense of sin, and they desire to know whether there is any hope for them. The apostle directs them to that Jesus whom they had crucified, in whom alone there is redemption through his blood, and to the cleansing efficacy of that blood as symbolically represented in baptism. But the convinced soul, laboring under a sense of guilt, anxiously inquires, is there forgiveness for me? Let not your heart yield to despondency, replies the apostle, for the *promise is unto you*. It was then a promise which contained encouragement for these sons of Abraham to look for pardon through faith in the Messiah, promised to their father. It was, in other words, the great promise contained in the covenant made with the father of the faithful, one prominent blessing included in which, was the plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit, which was to be consequent upon the coming of the Messiah. God had said to Abraham, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee." "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." "They who are of faith," the apostle informs us, "the same are the children of Abraham;" and they likewise are "blessed with faithful Abraham." These contrite sinners, then, are assured, that by embracing Jesus Christ in the exercise of faith, they would become the spiritual seed of Abraham who is the father of all them that believe, and would be blessed with faithful Abraham: that is, they would, like Abraham, be justified by faith in the righteousness of

Christ, and would be made partakers of the Holy Spirit in his quickening, sanctifying and comforting influences. And as an evidence of their faith in Christ, and subjection to his authority, the apostle requires them to be baptized in his name.

These words, it will be admitted, were well adapted to comfort the hearts of these contrite ones. But just in proportion to our solicitude in relation to the welfare of our own souls, will be the concern of the parental heart with regard to the spiritual interests of our children. These Jewish parents having learned that the gospel contained glad tidings for them, could not but be solicitous to know in what light this dispensation of grace and truth regarded their children. They were familiar with the state of things under the legal dispensation. They knew that when a parent professed his faith in the God of Abraham, he not only received circumcision himself, but his infant seed likewise were regarded as in covenant with God, and had a right to circumcision. But as yet they had no particular information respecting baptism, the sign under the new dispensation. Let not your hearts be troubled, replies the apostle; you shall not lose any thing by embracing christianity; for the promise is not to you only, but *to your children*. When it is kept in mind that these persons addressed by the apostle were Jews, who had always been accustomed to see the children of believers receive circumcision, it is not conceivable that they could understand him in any other sense than as teaching, that when a parent was received into the church by baptism, his children were regarded as having a right to the same privilege. "The promise is to you and to your children."

But the great promise here more especially referred

to appears with clearer evidence from the following declaration: "And to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." It is then a promise, in which, not the natural descendants of Abraham and their seed alone are interested, but one which opens a fountain of hope and consolation to the Gentile world. This circumstance at once leads back our minds to the promise made to Abraham, "In thy seed, shall *all the nations* of the earth be blessed." At the time when God revealed to Abraham his gracious purpose respecting his own family, saying, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee," it was made known in no ambiguous terms, that at some future day the nations generally should be interested in the blessings promised to the father of the faithful. In the prophetic benediction pronounced on Judah by the patriarch Jacob, it is said, in reference to the Messiah who is spoken of by the name Shiloh, "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be." At a later period God declares by the prophet Isaiah, "It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth." And in describing the moral change which the gospel would produce in the Gentile world, the following significant language is employed: "I will open rivers in high places, and mountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool and the dry land springs of water." These, and similar declarations in the prophetic writings, are only a developement of the comprehensive promise made to Abraham, and to which the apostle here refers. "In thy seed shall all the nations of the

earth be blessed.” And this promise has been in the progress of fulfilment ever since the Gentiles, by believing in Christ, became the spiritual seed of Abraham. And thus the blessing of Abraham has come upon the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ, that they might receive the promise of the spirit. With the greatest propriety then, might the apostle assure his hearers, who were awakened to a sense of their guilty and exposed condition, that this promise, originally made to their worthy ancestor, exhibited to them and to their children encouragement and consolation, while it opened a door of hope to the Gentile world.

Since then, in the promise given to Abraham, God had respect to his seed, and took them along with their father into visible covenant with himself by circumcision; and since the apostle assures these inquiring Jews for their encouragement, that the promise is “to you and to your children;” while he exhorts them to be baptized in the name of Jesus; therefore we conclude that it was his design to teach them that their children were now proper subjects of baptism, as they formerly had been the subjects of circumcision.

3. Having considered the doctrine which they taught, let us now inquire into the practice of the apostles, as it may be ascertained from the primitive history of the christian church. The first converts to christianity who would receive baptism, would of course be adults; and these the apostles would instruct in the principles of the christian religion, and then demand of them a profession of their faith in Christ before they were baptized. And that such was the apostolic practice all will admit. But among the early converts who embraced the gospel and were

baptized, some were parents, who had families under their care. In what light then did the apostles regard the children of those parents who were received into the christian church by baptism? If we are not mistaken, it was their uniform practice to regard them as the proper subjects of baptism.

This conclusion is drawn from the fact, that when the apostles baptized the head of a family, his household also were baptized. For example, Paul baptized the household of Stephanas; Lydia and her household; the jailer of Philippi and all his. It is true that it is not, in so many words, said that there were children in any of these households. But is it therefore a legitimate conclusion, that these households contained no children? Let us try how this mode of reasoning will work. It is not intimated that any one in these different households believed, except the head of the family; therefore, according to the mode of reasoning which excludes infants from these families, all the members, except the parents, were baptized without faith; which result is just as fatal to the baptist hypothesis as the supposition that all these households contained children. Now if my brother should say to me, "produce your positive proof that there were children in any of these households," I would say, with all kind feeling, "I will cheerfully comply with your demand, as soon as you have brought forward positive proof that any one person of these families believed, except the head. I want none of your inferences now. You insist in every case that the subject must be a believer before he can receive baptism. These different households were baptized. And now if you please let us have your positive proof of the faith of any one member of these families, the head only excepted. I pause for a reply."

I freely admit that it is not said in so many words, that there were children in any of these families. But this is not material to our argument. Our argument rests upon the scriptural acceptation of the term *household*. What is meant by this term when a man and his household are spoken of in Scripture? It means his family, and particularly his children. As examples of the scriptural use of the term house, or household, as including children, you may notice the following. When Boaz called all the people and the elders to bear witness to the consummation of the marriage union between him and Ruth, they replied, "We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house, like Rachel, and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel. And let thy house be like the house of Pharez whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman."* Rachel and Leah built up the house of Jacob; and how? Evidently by bearing to him children. And in what manner did the people and the elders expect that Ruth would render the house of Boaz like to the house of Pharez? Plainly by becoming the mother of children. Here, then, we have examples in which the term house particularly includes children. Again; the apostle, speaking of the qualifications of a bishop, observes: "A bishop must be blameless; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection. For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?"† Here it is manifest that the term house is used to signify a family, and particularly a family of children.

* Ruth, 4 : 11, 12.

† 1 Timothy, 3 : 4, 5.

Since, therefore, the sacred scriptures employ the term house to signify a man's family, and particularly his children; when, in the history of the propagation of christianity, we meet with the record, that a particular person and his household were baptized, the natural conclusion is, that the children of that person were baptized. This, I say, is the natural conclusion, because it is the one to which we are led by the language, when taken in its ordinary acceptation. And we cannot come to any other conclusion, unless in the cases referred to, there is something connected with these households which shows that the term must be understood in an unusual sense, and that from these households, infants must necessarily be excluded. It is said by our brethren, that in every case, faith is a necessary qualification for baptism. But infants cannot exercise faith; therefore they should not be baptized.

But what are the facts recorded, in relation to the baptism of Lydia and her household, and of the jailer and all his? Is there any mention made of the faith of any one of these households, Lydia and the jailer only excepted? None. Of Lydia it is distinctly stated that the Lord opened her heart; but the history is utterly silent with regard to such a gracious operation upon the heart of any other member of her family. Not only so, but it seems to be plainly intimated that Lydia herself was the only believer of the family. When she invited Paul and his companions to come to her house and partake of her hospitality, she said to them, "If you have judged *me* to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there."* Her language conveys no allusion to the

* Acts, 16: 15.

faith of any other member of her family, and evidently supposes that she was the only one of her household who had believed. And yet, she and her household were baptized. And, in accordance with this example, when the Lord opens the heart of a parent, and he makes a profession of his faith in Christ, we baptize the parent and his children. For the promise is *to you and to your children*.

And what are the facts in the case of the jailer? He believed in God, but there is entire silence in relation to the faith of any other member of his family. And yet, "he and all his were baptized." To say, then, that the members of these households were all adults, and that they were baptized upon their own profession of faith, is to make a supposition to suit a hypothesis, of which, not only is there not the shadow of proof, but which is at variance with the circumstances of the case.

The argument in favor of the baptism of infants, drawn from the practice of the apostles in baptizing households, will appear still more conclusive when you consider, in connection with the apostolic practice, what had long been Jewish usage. Though the church of God, under the former dispensation, was, in a great degree, confined to the natural descendants of Abraham, yet proselytes from the heathen nations were occasionally received into the commonwealth of Israel. And when a Gentile parent renounced idolatry, and was admitted to the fellowship of the Jewish church, he and all the males of his household were circumcised, and afterwards, all the family, both male and female, were baptized. It is true that, in relation to this fact as well as in relation to every other matter of any importance, there is among learned men some diversity of opinion. But

that it was the custom of the Jews, previous to the first promulgation of the gospel, to receive proselytes into fellowship by baptism, is a fact, of which I consider the historical evidence entirely conclusive. With regard to the fact, that such was Jewish usage, previous to the time when baptism was instituted as the initiatory ordinance of the christian dispensation, I deem it sufficient for my present purpose to adduce the testimony of the learned Rabbi Maimonides, the illustrious expounder of the Jewish law, who was regarded by his countrymen as inferior only to Moses, their legislator himself. According to this distinguished writer, the nation of Israel was admitted into the covenant by three things: circumcision, baptism, and sacrifice. In support of his position, with regard to baptism, he refers to the divine direction given to Moses at Mount Sinai, previous to the delivery of the law. "Sanctify them to-day, and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes."* Whether his interpretation of the sacred text is correct or not, is a matter with which we are not at present concerned. Whether baptism was practised among the Jews or not, is a question of fact. And this learned Jew is certainly a competent witness, as to what was the practice of his countrymen. He then informs us that such was Jewish usage; and he traces the origin of this usage to the occurrence to which I have referred. And as the nation of Israel was thus admitted into covenant with God, so, he adds, "In all ages, when a Gentile is willing to enter into covenant and gather himself under the wings of the majesty of God, and take upon him the yoke of the law, he must be circumcised, and be baptized, and bring a

* Exodus, 19 : 10.

sacrifice." When the proselyte was a female, she was required to receive baptism, and bring a sacrifice. It was a received maxim, that no one could be a proselyte and admitted into the fellowship of the Jewish church, without receiving circumcision and baptism. And when a Gentile parent was received into the Jewish church, not only was he himself circumcised, and afterwards baptized, but the males of his house were likewise received by circumcision and baptism, and the females by baptism. This being the custom of the Jewish church, when the apostles, who were Jews, are said to have baptized certain parents and their households, the obvious meaning of the declaration is, that these parents, with their children, were received into the christian church by baptism.

When it is remembered that the Jews regarded the Gentiles as unholy, and that they were accustomed to divers washings, for the purpose of removing uncleanness, it was not unnatural to adopt this mode of receiving a proselyte from another nation. It was in accordance with existing ideas and usages. Nor is it a serious objection to our position that, on the supposition that the baptism of proselytes existed among the Jews as a human usage, our Lord would not have adopted it as an institution of the christian church. Something analogous to this is observable with regard to another ordinance. It was certainly the custom of the Jews to unite with the eating of the passover, the drinking of a cup of wine. To this custom it is evident our Lord and his disciples conformed; and accordingly in the passover which he observed just before he instituted the Eucharist, "he took the cup and gave thanks and said, take this and

divide it among yourselves.”* And yet we have no account of the divine appointment of the cup in the passover. Notwithstanding, when our Lord instituted the Eucharist as a standing ordinance of his church, he retained the cup which he had used in the passover, and made it the emblem of his blood, shed for the remission of sin.

The question then, is, not whether baptism existed among the Jews as an ordinance of divine appointment; for of this, we admit, there is no evidence, but simply, was it the custom of the Jews to receive proselytes by baptism? That it was, the Jewish writings afford abundant evidence. And when a Gentile parent was received into the Jewish church, he and all his household were baptized.

And these things being kept in view, it is easy to see that there was no necessity for the apostles to give particular instructions on the subject of the baptism of infants. It was a matter with which the minds of the Jews were familiar: they had long been accustomed to see the children of proselytes to their religion baptized: and hence, when baptism was instituted as the initiatory rite of the new dispensation, and circumcision was abolished, they would expect, as a matter of course, that the children of those who embraced christianity were to be baptized.

On the supposition, then, that it had been the design of the new dispensation to exclude infants from baptism, it would have been necessary for the apostles to have stated the fact particularly to their hearers, and to have assigned some satisfactory reason for it. But that the apostles taught no such doctrine, is evident from the silence of the Jews on the subject.

* Luke, 22 : 17.

The Jews were tenacious of their peculiar privileges. They knew that their children, even from the days of Abraham, had been jointly with themselves interested in the privileges of God's covenant. And is it credible that they would surrender a privilege so dear to the parental heart, without a murmur? The whole history of the New Testament shows that the Jews were, on all occasions, watching for an opportunity to find fault with the gospel; and had it been the fact that the new dispensation cuts off the children of believers from a privilege they once enjoyed, it would have furnished to the hands of the captious scribes and pharisees, an argument well adapted to awaken in the public mind opposition to christianity. But among all the objections which were urged against the doctrine of our Lord and his apostles, there is no allusion to any thing of this kind. And the only satisfactory explanation of their silence on this subject which can be given, is, that the gospel which they preached was liable to no such objection.

That it has been the practice of the Jews to baptize proselytes, from the period of the second century of the christian era down to modern times, will not be denied by those who are unwilling to assign to it a more ancient date. If, then, baptism was not in use among the Jews, previous to the introduction of the gospel, it will follow that they must have borrowed this rite from the christian church. But when the inveterate opposition of the Jews to christianity is considered, is it not utterly incredible that they would conform to the usages of a religion which they hated, by adopting one of its distinguishing institutions?

And, independent of this consideration, how are we to account for the fact that, when John the bap-

tist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, and in the exercise of his ministry baptized those who came to him, the administration of this rite does not appear to have excited any surprise? Had it been something entirely new, the universal inquiry would naturally have been, what is this? The Jews sent messengers to John to demand what authority he had to baptize; but they make no inquiry with regard to the meaning or design of baptism itself. They speak of it, not as something altogether unheard of, but as a thing with which their minds were entirely familiar. They do not ask, as they naturally would have done, had it been something new, with which they were wholly unacquainted, What do you mean by this singular rite? But their inquiry is simply, What authority have you to administer this rite? "Why baptizest thou?"* On the supposition that the Jews had long been familiar with baptism in the case of proselytes to their religion, the inquiry was natural; but had they been wholly unacquainted with such a rite, their first inquiry would naturally have been, What is the meaning and design of this new institution?

I regard it, then, as a well established fact, that previous to the introduction of the christian dispensation, it was the custom of the Jews to receive proselytes by baptism. When a Gentile parent embraced the Jewish religion, he and all the males of his family were circumcised, and afterwards, he and all his household were baptized. And this being the fact, when the sacred history informs us that the apostles baptized parents and their households, the natural conclusion is, that when believing parents

* John, 1 : 25.

were made partakers of baptism, their children also were baptized.

4. That infant baptism is the doctrine of the New Testament, I argue, in the next place, from the declaration of the apostle with regard to those children, one of whose parents only is a believer; “Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.”* That the import of this declaration may be correctly understood, it will be necessary to attend to the circumstances of the case to which the apostle refers. When the gospel was first preached in the heathen world, it frequently happened that one of the married pair would embrace the religion of Jesus, while the other remained an idolater. Occurrences of this kind gave rise to a question in the primitive church, as to the propriety of a believing husband or wife remaining in matrimonial connection with an unbeliever.† It was the more natural that some difficulty should exist among Jewish christians, in relation to this matter, in consequence of what had taken place in the days of Ezra. Certain Jews who, in violation of their law, had married strange wives, were actually required to dissolve the connection and separate themselves from them.‡ On this subject the apostle was consulted by the Corinthian church, and his answer is expressed in the following words: “If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.” “And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.”§ And as a reason to recommend this direction, the apostle adds, “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the

* 1 Corin. 7: 14. † Ezra, 10: 11. ‡ 1 Corin. 7: 12—14.

unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now they are holy." To the correct interpretation of this passage it is necessary to ascertain the import of the terms "sanctified" and "holy," as here employed by the apostle.

1. They are certainly not used to convey the idea of moral purity of heart. The apostle evidently does not teach that union in marriage with a believer in Christ, will make an unbeliever a partaker of moral holiness. The sanctification of the soul is every where traced in scripture to a higher source. And it is equally plain that the children of christian parents do not inherit holiness of heart from their parents. They, as well as other children, are partakers of a depraved nature; and it is only in consequence of being born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, that they are made partakers of internal holiness.

2. Nor does the apostle employ the term "holy," in the sense of "legitimate," as some baptist writers contend. Such an interpretation is in fact too ridiculous to deserve a serious refutation. It invents a signification for the word "holy," which it no where bears in the sacred volume; and besides, if it has any meaning, it supposes that faith in Christ, on the part of the parent, is necessary to the legitimacy of children. And according to this interpretation, the children of unbelieving parents, however regularly married, are illegitimate!

3. One of the most common acceptations of the term holy, in the sacred scriptures, is, separation to some sacred use, dedication to God. Thus the temple, and all its utensils, are termed holy; the Sabbath is holy; the first fruits are holy. Certain animals were proper to be offered in sacrifice to God, while

others were prohibited. The former are holy, the latter are unclean. When, therefore, the apostle says of the children of a believing parent that they are holy, I understand him as saying, that such a parent, being in covenant with God, and separated from the world to the service of God, his children enjoy the benefit of this relation, and may therefore with propriety be dedicated to God.

From the character of the answer which the apostle gives to the inquiry of the Corinthians, it is evident that their concern originated in some doubt with regard to the light in which their offspring, in such cases, would be regarded by the church. And hence the reference which the apostle makes to their children. In cases where both parents were believers, it would appear there existed no doubt. The offspring of such parents, it was understood, were interested in the privileges of God's covenant with his church. But here is a case with regard to which our Lord had given no particular instructions during the period of his personal ministry; and hence in his answer the apostle says, "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord." In such a case as this, where one parent was a believer and the other an unbeliever, the condition of their offspring might seem to be doubtful. In so far as the believing parent was concerned, the children were interested in the covenant, the tenor of which is, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee;" but when viewed as the offspring of an unbelieving parent, the children had no interest in the privileges of the covenant. How then are such children to be regarded? What is the nature of their relation to the church? Are they within the enclosure of the covenant, or are they identified with the world, which is in a state of rebel-

lion against God? This is the question; and it is easy to see that it is one of the deepest interest to the parental heart. Let not the heart of any parent be troubled, replies the apostle. The God of benig- nity and love has decided in favor of the feelings and desires of the christian disciple. The child, in such cases, inherits the privileges of the covenant from the believing parent, and is not excluded by reason of its connection with the unbelieving parent. The unbelieving partner is so far sanctified by the believing partner, that your children are holy; that is, included in the bond of God's covenant with his church, and, therefore, proper subjects of dedication to God in baptism.

Such, then, is a brief summary of the reasons which lead us to the conclusion that infant baptism is a doctrine of the scriptures. We shall, in the next place, inquire, in so far as the lights of history point out the way, what was the practice of the church in the ages immediately succeeding the time of the apostles? And here, let it be remarked, that our faith does not rest upon the testimony of the fathers, but upon the word of God. However, it is to be supposed that those who lived in the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles, were acquainted with the practice of the apostolic churches. And though in general they are not entitled to much regard as expounders of the doctrines of the gospel, yet, the fathers are certainly competent to bear testimony as to matters of fact, which came under their own observation. If, then, it shall appear, as the result of inquiry, that those who immediately succeeded the apostles regarded the infants of believers as proper subjects of baptism, it will serve to strengthen our conviction that the view which we have taken of the doctrine and practice of the apostles is correct.

The first testimony to which I shall direct your attention is, that of Justin Martyr, who suffered martyrdom about the middle of the second century. This distinguished man, after having studied the different systems of philosophy which were taught in heathen schools, and being satisfied with none of them, was finally brought to the knowledge of christianity, which he embraced as the "only certain and useful philosophy." Among his writings, the most celebrated are, his Dialogue with Trypho, the Jew; and his Apologies for Christianity, presented to the reigning emperor. In his Dialogue with the Jew, he says, "We also, who by him have had access to God, have not received this carnal circumcision, but the spiritual circumcision which Enoch, and those like him, observed. And we have received it by baptism, by the mercy of God, because we were sinners; and it is allowed to all persons to receive it, in the same manner." My object in introducing this quotation is, to show that this most ancient father represents baptism as being to christians what circumcision was to the church of God, of old, as we have endeavored to prove in a preceding lecture. And hence the conclusion is, that infants are as properly the subjects of the one as of the other.

This father, in giving an account of his christian brethren, in his Apology, presented to the Roman emperor, makes the following declaration: "There are many persons among us, both male and female, of sixty and seventy years of age, who, from childhood, were made disciples to Christ, who remain uncorrupted." These persons, who were seventy years of age when Justin wrote, and who were made disciples from childhood, must have been introduced into the school of Christ in the age of the apostles. And how were these children made disciples?

Evidently, by being dedicated unto the Lord Jesus Christ and baptized in his name, and thus recognised as being in connection with the church of Christ. It is worthy of remark that the term here used by this venerable father, is the same which is employed by our Lord in the commission given to his apostles; "Go, *teach* (disciple) all nations, baptizing them." It seems then, that this ancient father understood that children might be made disciples to Christ, and baptized in his name, according to the command of our Lord and Saviour.

The next testimony which I shall adduce, is that of Tertullian, who was born about fifty years after the death of the apostle John. The testimony of this learned father is the more conclusive, as to what was, at that time, the usage of the church; because he himself, being somewhat remarkable for his extravagant opinions, was rather unfriendly to infant baptism. In certain cases he advised the delay of baptism. Accordingly he says, "Therefore according to every one's condition and disposition, and also their age, the delaying of baptism is more profitable, especially in the case of little children." Having expressed this opinion, he notices an objection to which it was liable, founded upon the words of our Lord addressed to those parents, who brought their children to him to receive his blessing. "It is true," he observes, "our Lord says, suffer little children, and forbid them not to come to me." To this he replies, "Then let them come, when they are grown." On this testimony I remark, that it is evident that the baptism of infants was then common; otherwise, it would have been unnecessary for Tertullian to give his advice in favor of delay. But while he advises delay, he does not pretend that the practice of

infant baptism was wrong in itself; but delay is recommended, lest children after baptism should fall into sin. And for a similar reason, he advises the delay of baptism in the case of unmarried persons, lest they should afterwards fall into temptation. It is moreover evident from the testimony of Tertullian, not only that it was then common in the church to baptize infants, but that the words of our Lord, "suffer little children and forbid them not to come to me," were regarded as furnishing an argument in support of the right of infant baptism. And the reply of Tertullian shows conclusively, that he was unable to meet the argument. With the opinions of this learned but erratic father, we are not concerned. On various subjects, his views were wild and visionary. His opposition to the baptism of children, and likewise of unmarried persons, had its origin in superstitious views of the ordinance itself; and his recommendation of the delay of baptism, when taken in connection with his reasons for it, affords conclusive evidence that it was then the practice of the church to baptize infants.

The next witness, who bears decided testimony to the fact, that it was the practice of the primitive church to baptize infants, is the famous Origen, who was born in the latter part of the second century. He was a man of great learning and one of the most distinguished writers of his age. When speaking on the subject of the original depravity of our nature, Origen in the first place establishes the truth by the authority of scripture, and then shows that it was a doctrine which the church had always maintained, as is evident from her practice, in relation to the baptism of infants. "Let it be considered," says he, "what is the reason, that whereas the baptism of the

church, is given for forgiveness of sins, infants also, are by the usage of the church baptized; when, if there were nothing in infants that wanted forgiveness and mercy, the grace of baptism would be needless to them. Again, he observes, "*The church had from the apostles an order to give baptism to infants; for they to whom the divine mysteries were committed, knew that there is in all persons, the natural pollution of sin, which must be washed away by water and the Spirit.*" It will be perceived that Origen, in these passages, argues in support of the doctrine of original sin from the practice of infant baptism. This, then, must have been in his age, the uncontroverted usage of the church; otherwise his reasoning would have been inconclusive. According to the testimony of Origen, then, the church was instructed by the apostles to give baptism to infants; and such was the practice of the church from the beginning to the middle of the third century, at which time the labors of this distinguished writer terminated.

One of the most eminent fathers of the third century was Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, who, after an active and useful life suffered martyrdom in the year A. D. 258. During the life of Cyprian, in the year A. D. 250, a christian council was held in Carthage, composed of sixty-six ministers of the gospel. Among the subjects which came before this assembly, one was, Whether the baptism of a child should be confined to the eighth day, as was the divine appointment in the case of circumcision. A certain individual of the name of Fidus, had contended for the affirmative of this question. It was admitted universally that baptism had succeeded circumcision. And hence Fidus concluded that baptism, like cir-

cumcision, should be administered on the eighth day. Accordingly, the subject came before the council. In a letter written by Cyprian, after the adjournment of the council, we are informed, that the members were entirely unanimous in the decision that baptism should not be confined to any particular day.

Here, then, we have an assembly of christian ministers, sixty-six in number, convened about one hundred and fifty years after the death of the apostle John. Among all the members of this assembly, there was no diversity of opinion as to the fact, that baptism had succeeded circumcision. Neither did any one pretend to call in question, the right of infant baptism. The only question, which was agitated, was whether baptism, like circumcision, should be administered on the eighth day. And the unanimous decision of the council was, that baptism might be administered at any time, either before or after the eighth day, according to circumstances. Such was the doctrine and practice of the church during the third century.

The greatest luminary in the ecclesiastical firmament in the latter part of the fourth, and in the early part of the fifth century, was the famous Augustine, bishop of Hippo. During this age, the peace of the church was greatly disturbed by Pelagius, the monk, who denied the doctrine of the original depravity of human nature, and taught that a child, at its birth, is as free from sin as Adam was, when he was at first created in the image of God. In the person of Augustine, God raised up an able advocate of the truth, in opposition to this dangerous heresy. An argument with which Pelagius was exceedingly perplexed, and one by which his doctrine was effectually exposed as an innovation upon the faith of the church,

was drawn from the universally admitted usage of the church, in relation to the baptism of infants. It was the well known practice of the church, to administer baptism to infants, for the remission of sins. "Why then," inquired Augustine, "does the church give baptism to infants, for the remission of sin, if they are already free from the contamination of sin?" This question gave Pelagius no little difficulty. But on the supposition, that the practice of baptizing infants had been introduced into the church by mere human authority, it would have been exceedingly convenient for Pelagius to have denied the right of infant baptism. But does this learned adversary of the truth either dispute the fact, or call in question the propriety of the practice of the church? He is so far from both the one and the other, that he even complains that some had slandered him, by representing him as denying the right of infant baptism. And he not only admits that it was the universal practice of the church, but he declares, that he had never heard, "*even of an impious heretic who denied that infants should be baptized.*"

The writings of Augustine furnish abundant evidence, that it was not only in the age in which he lived, the universal practice of the christian church, to baptize infants, but that it was on all hands admitted, that this had been the uniform practice of the church from the days of the apostles. This subject is very frequently referred to by this venerable father, in his controversial writings both with the Pelagians and the Donatists. And it is particularly worthy of remark, that the object of Augustine in referring to infant baptism is not so much to prove that the practice of the church was scriptural, as to argue from what all admitted to be correct usage, in support of

the conclusion which he wished to establish. In his controversy with the Pelagians his object was to establish the doctrine of the original corruption of our nature. This doctrine he establishes by the authority of scripture, and then shows, that it was the received faith of the church, from the days of the apostles, as was evident from the universal practice of the church in baptizing infants for the remission of sin. Pelagius, without any hesitation, admitted that such was the universal custom. Though he had travelled extensively among the churches in Europe, Asia and Africa, and though he was a man of learning and of extensive research, yet he declares that he had never heard of any one who denied the propriety of baptizing infants.

The Donatists were a sect who withdrew from the communion of the general church, not on account of any diversity of opinion with regard to the doctrines of the gospel, but on account of a difficulty connected with a matter involving ecclesiastical order. They would not acknowledge the validity of the ministrations of the general church. And hence they baptized any who came over to their community from the general church. Against the unreasonable rigidity of this sect Augustine's pen was successfully employed. From the nature of the controversy, the subject of baptism is often introduced. And referring to the practice of the church in giving baptism to infants, Augustine represents it as a usage, "*held by the universal church, not appointed by councils, but ordained by apostolical authority.*"*

With these historical testimonies before us, we are fully sustained in the conclusion, that infant baptism

* Aug. contra Don. lib. 4, chap. 24.

was universally practised in the christian church, from the days of the apostles to the time of Augustine, in the early part of the fifth century.

That infant baptism was common in the church from the age of Augustine, down to the period of the reformation, will not be denied by any who are at all conversant with ecclesiastical history. It is a fact with which protestants, at least, are familiar, that during the period in the history of the church, usually denominated "the dark ages," there was no part of the world in which the lamp of evangelical truth emitted so clear a light as in the vallies of Piedmont, among the Waldenses. In this sequestered portion of the globe there was a remnant, who, when pure and undefiled religion had, in a manner, retired from public view, maintained the truth and worshipped God in the spirit of the gospel. It will, therefore, be interesting to know in what light infant baptism was regarded by these witnesses for the truth. I am aware that some writers who oppose infant baptism, claim the inhabitants of the vallies as witnesses in their favor. And the fact that some individuals, and possibly some minor sects, who were classed by their opponents under the general name of Waldenses, were unfriendly to the baptism of infants, gives some degree of plausibility to this claim. From the time when the Roman church gave the sanction of her authority to the worship of images, the invocation of departed saints, transubstantiation, and other dangerous errors, there arose in different parts of Christendom, various persons, who, in one form or other, testified against the reigning corruptions. Among all those denominations, who lifted up a standard for the truth, and in opposition to these pernicious errors, the Waldenses were the most numerous and the most

respectable. And hence their adversaries, the devotees of the Roman see, sometimes represented all who opposed the tyranny and the corruption of the Roman church under the general name of Waldenses. Some of these sects were exceedingly corrupt, and agreed with the Waldenses, properly so called, in almost nothing, save in their opposition to papal tyranny. Such were the Manichees, who rejected baptism with water altogether, whether in the case of infants or adults. The Petrobrussians, the followers of Peter de Bruys, appear to have opposed the baptism of infants, upon the ground, that they were incapable both of faith and of salvation. But as to the Waldenses themselves, properly so called, that they practised infant baptism, is abundantly evident from their own confessions of faith. And in addition to the evidence furnished by their own writings, their descendants of the present day, not only baptize infants, but declare that such was always the practice of their ancestors.

And when the light of the reformation broke forth upon the world, when the traditions of the fathers were brought down from that eminence which they had usurped, and the sacred scriptures were exalted to their proper place, what was the doctrine of the reformers? On whatever other points there may have existed some diversity of opinion on the subject of infant baptism, there was among the noble band of reformers entire agreement. Luther and Melancthon, in Germany; Zuingli, in Switzerland; Calvin, in Geneva; Knox, in Scotland; Cranmer, and his associates, in England; all united in regarding infant baptism as a doctrine of scripture. And when we consider, in connection with the argument from scripture, the evidence which history affords, that

this doctrine has been held by the church in every age, from the days of the apostles down to the glorious era of the reformation; and then that it occupies a place in the religious confessions of the reformed church in every nation to which the light of the reformation extended, we cannot entertain a doubt that it is a doctrine embraced in the faith once delivered to the saints.

LECTURE IV.

MODE OF BAPTISM.

IN entering upon the consideration of the proper manner of administering the rite of baptism, it may be proper to make a remark with regard to the peculiar nature of those ordinances which are denominated sacraments. It is a characteristic of a sacrament, that it presents to our view spiritual things, through the medium of an external and visible sign. In a sacrament, there are, therefore, two things to be considered, the visible sign and the thing of which, by divine appointment, the sign is significant. In the sacrament of baptism, the external sign is water. One of the most common uses to which water is applied, and to which there is reference in this sacrament, is washing. The application of water to the body of the person baptized, is significant of the necessity of cleansing, while at the same time, it teaches by an expressive figurative action that the means of purification have been provided. While the author of baptism very emphatically proclaims in this institution that we are unclean, and therefore must be washed, he no less distinctly declares that there is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. But no one who understands the nature and design of this ordinance, will maintain that it is the cleansing of the body from external defilement, which is signified by baptism. That man's heart is not right with God, is the humbling truth, which

is significantly taught in this institution; and by the application of a cleansing element, is proclaimed the necessity of the removal of the moral pollution of sin from the soul. But, it is perfectly evident, that this important end cannot be effected by water, no matter what may be the mode of its application, or the quantity which may be used. It is not the water of baptism, but *the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from all sin*; and of the purifying efficacy of this atoning blood, water, in the sacrament of baptism, is the significant emblem. There is, consequently, an evident impropriety in making the validity of baptism depend upon the quantity of the external sign which is used, or the particular manner in which the water is applied to the body.

Our brethren regard it as essential to baptism, that the body of the person baptized be completely immersed in water. They allege that the only proper signification of the original term translated baptism, is immersion; and from this position they draw the conclusion, that there is no baptism where there is not an immersion of the whole body in water. Let us for a moment suppose, that the position assumed is correct. Are our brethren consistent with themselves in their manner of reasoning? Why do they attach so much importance to the supposed meaning of a term in the sacrament of baptism, as to make the validity of the ordinance depend upon the mode of its administration, while no such importance is attached to the real and admitted meaning of the word employed in that sacrament, which was instituted in memory of our Lord's death? With regard to this latter institution, every one knows that it is denomina-

ted a supper and a feast. And it will not be denied, that the true and proper import of the term employed with reference to this sacrament, is a supper. If the import of the term was in any degree ambiguous, all ambiguity is removed by the circumstances connected with the original appointment of this ordinance. It was instituted in the evening of the day, immediately after our Lord and his disciples had observed the paschal supper. This sacrament, then, is confessedly denominated a supper and a feast. And yet, do our brethren, in the observation of the Lord's supper, partake of any thing which looks like a literal supper or feast? Do they consider it necessary to celebrate the sacred supper, which commemorates the death of our Lord, in the evening of the day? Does the participation of a morsel of bread and a taste of wine, in the Eucharist, bear any greater resemblance to a feast, than the application of a little water to the face, does to the washing of the whole body in water? Why then is the validity of the one sacrament made to depend upon the mode of administration, while no such importance is attached to the mode, in the observation of the other? To these questions, no satisfactory answer can be given, consistently with the principles and practice of our brethren.

But though there is an inconsistency in making such a distinction between these two sacraments, it is freely conceded, that in every ordinance, whatever is divinely appointed, should be carefully observed. We all agree, that in baptism water is the element which must be used. And I most freely admit, that if in the institution of baptism our Lord has appointed the particular mode according to

which the water should be applied, it is obligatory upon the church to conform strictly to the divine appointment.

It is maintained by our brethren, that it is essential to the proper administration of baptism, that the whole body should be put under water. And in support of this hypothesis, their principal argument is drawn from the supposed signification of the original terms, which are translated, baptize and baptism. These terms, they contend, convey the idea of immersion only, and consequently, their conclusion is, that where there is not an immersion in water, of the person baptized, there is no baptism.

In opposition to this hypothesis, I do not hesitate to maintain, that there is not a single instance in the whole New Testament, in which either of these words is used, where the sense of the passage requires us to suppose that there was an actual immersion, or where the circumstances of the case prove that there really was an immersion; while there are instances in which these terms are employed in a sense which is utterly inconsistent with the idea of immersion. And if this position can be sustained, it is perfectly plain that the chief argument in support of the exclusive claims of immersion, will be at once overthrown. Our appeal then is to the law and the testimony. And let me remark generally, that the true import of the words baptize and baptism, when used with reference to a christian institution, is to be determined not by the use which is made of them by classic authors, who knew nothing about christian baptism, but by scriptural usage. Let us suppose for the present that Homer and Hesiod, and Aristotle and Herodotus, and other classic authors, more commonly employ the Greek

word, which is translated *baptize*, to convey the idea of immersion. Let this be granted, which to say the least, is all that the scholar can claim; still, it would by no means follow, that the sacred writers use the word in precisely the same sense, in reference to an institution, of which these heathen authors had no knowledge. That with which we are concerned, let it be particularly remembered, is not classic, but scriptural usage.

In endeavoring to ascertain what is the scriptural mode of administering baptism, we naturally direct our attention to the primitive institution of the ordinance. The account given of the original institution of this sacrament, is in the following words: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." In this declaration, we discover nothing which indicates any particular mode of baptism, except in so far as it is determined by the word *baptizing*. In order therefore to ascertain the import of the word as employed by our Lord, we must search the scriptures to see in what sense it is employed elsewhere; as there is nothing here which determines what is its signification. If the scriptures uniformly employ it for the purpose of conveying the idea of immersion, then of course it will follow, that the scriptural mode of baptism is by immersion. But if the word is often used where the idea of immersion is not only not necessary to the sense of the sacred writer, but altogether inconsistent with it, then it is plain, as already observed, that the main argument in support of the claims of immersion, deduced from the signification of the word *baptize*, at once falls to the ground.

And in the determination of this question, which

is a matter of interest, not to the scholar merely, but to the humble christian, who desires to know and do his Lord's will, our appeal shall be, not to Greek Lexicons, nor to pagan classics, but to the plain language of the New Testament.

1. Let me direct your attention to examples of the use of the word baptize, in which it does not convey the idea of immersion. And in the very first instance in which the word is employed in the history of the christian church, it is used to convey the idea of "*pouring out.*" "John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence."* Here is a promise given to the apostles by our Lord, that they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost. And in the following chapter, we have the history of the fulfilment of this promise. But in what manner were the apostles baptized with the Holy Ghost? The only answer which can be given to this question, rebukes the pretensions of those who claim for the word baptize, the exclusive sense of immersion. The apostles of our Lord were baptized with the Holy Ghost, by having his divine influences *poured out* upon them. Accordingly the apostle Peter accounts for this remarkable event, by saying to those who beheld it with amazement, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will *pour out* of my Spirit upon all flesh."† Another example of the same kind is furnished in the history of the apostle Peter's labors in the house of Cornelius: "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." And the Jews who were present

* Acts 1:5.

† Acts 2:17.

on this occasion were astonished, "because, that on the Gentiles also, was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost."* When Peter was called to account by his Jewish brethren, who preferred against him the charge, "Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them," his reply was, "As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the words of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost."† Here again, those persons on whom the Holy Ghost *fell*, or was *poured out*, are said to be baptized with the Holy Ghost. And the humble, unlettered christian, who can read his bible, and in simplicity believe it, can see that in these instances, the individuals spoken of, received baptism, not by immersion, but by having that with which they were baptized, poured out upon them. And if the baptism of the Spirit was communicated to those who were the subjects of it, by pouring out his influences upon them, then it is as clear as the light, that baptism with water, may be scripturally administered by pouring water upon the person baptized.

Take another example, which is equally irreconcilable with the hypothesis, that the word baptize signifies exclusively, to immerse. In his epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle says, "Brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea."‡ According to the apostle, then, the Israelites were baptized in the sea. But, in what manner were they baptized? Were they

* Acts 10:45. † Acts 11:15, 16. ‡ 1 Cor. 10:1, 2.

plunged into the sea? It is absolutely certain that they were not. What says the history on this subject? "The children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left."* Will it be pretended, that the word baptized in this instance conveys the idea of any thing like immersion? What! A passage through the sea was opened sufficiently wide for the thousands of Israel to pass through, so that they walked on dry ground, and yet will it be said, that they were plunged in the sea? It would surely be useless to undertake to reason with a man who can bring himself to believe that to walk on dry land through the sea, and to be immersed in the sea, are the same thing!

And here, permit me to remark, that in this case, there is no necessity for criticisms on the original text, which the common christian cannot understand. There is no need to call in the help of learned Lexicons to determine the meaning of a Greek word. The humble and teachable disciple of Christ, who can read the word of God in his own language, can easily see that the word baptized in this place does not convey the idea of immersion; and consequently, that they who assert that the only meaning of the word baptize, is to immerse, make a declaration which is much more remarkable for its boldness, than for its truth.

2. Having seen that the sacred writers employ the term baptize where the idea of immersion is entirely inadmissible, let me now call your attention to some examples, in which the words baptize and baptism are used to convey the idea of *washing*, with-

* Exodus 14 : 29.

out designating particularly the mode in which the cleansing element is applied. On a particular occasion our Lord was invited to dine with a Pharisee. And as he did not conform to those rites of purification which this Jewish sect were accustomed to observe, we are informed that the Pharisee " marvelled, that he had not first washed (baptized) before dinner."* One of the traditions of the Pharisees required, that after mingling in society, they should wash their hands before they sat down to meat, lest, by having come into contact with some person or thing that was unclean, they might have contracted ceremonial pollution. Hence, they came to Jesus on a particular occasion, inquiring, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the Elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread."† The Pharisee, with whom our Lord had been invited to dine, was surprised to see that he, whom he doubtless regarded as a distinguished prophet, should neglect to observe this tradition of the Elders, and sit down to meat without having previously washed his hands. "He marvelled that he had not first *baptized* before dinner." Here the word baptized does not designate any particular mode of applying water, but simply conveys the idea of ceremonial cleansing by the use of water.

And it is worthy of particular notice, that the evangelists, Matthew and Mark, when referring to this same pharisaic custom, employ a different word to convey the idea of washing, and one which is never used in the sense of immersion. Not only so, but the evangelist Mark, after having used a term which is employed to signify the washing of differ-

* Luke 11 : 38.

† Matthew 15 : 2.

ent parts of the body, such as the hands or feet, but which in no case signifies the immersion of the whole body, drops it, and takes up the word baptize with reference to the same washing, observed by the Pharisees for ceremonial purification. "For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the Elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash (baptize) they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing (baptism) of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels."* It is evidently not of the washing of these domestic utensils for ordinary purposes, that the sacred writer is here speaking, but of that washing which had for its object the removal of ceremonial pollution. According to the traditions of the Elders, there was an almost infinite variety of ways in which both persons and things might contract uncleanness. And for the removal of such uncleanness, a corresponding variety of ceremonies was prescribed. And these various rites of purification, some of which at least, were certainly performed by sprinkling the water of purification upon the person or thing cleansed, are all represented by the term washing or baptism. Here then it is manifest, that the idea conveyed by the term baptism, is not immersion, but simply *cleansing*.

Another example of the same kind occurs in the description which the apostle gives of the various rites and ceremonies, connected with the service of the first tabernacle. "Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers *washings*, (*baptisms*,) and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time

* Mark 7:3, 4.

of reformation.”* Here the various rites of purification, divinely prescribed under the ceremonial law, are termed *divers baptisms*. As it respects the particular manner in which these rites were performed, it may be remarked that there was some diversity. But we have only to open the writings of Moses to see that one very common mode of purification was, by sprinkling either blood or water upon the thing to be purified. Moses is directed to take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them. “And thus shalt thou do unto them to cleanse them: *sprinkle water of purifying upon them.*”† By coming in contact with a dead body, ceremonial uncleanness was contracted. “This is the law, when a man dieth in a tent, all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days.” And for the removal of such uncleanness, the following rule was established: “A clean person shall take hyssop and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there.”‡ It is then perfectly plain that one of the modes of cleansing from ceremonial pollution, was by sprinkling water upon the person or thing to be cleansed. And the apostle referring to the Levitical purifications generally, represents them as *divers baptisms*. We have therefore the authority of the apostle for saying that the person on whom the water of baptism is sprinkled, is baptized in a scriptural manner.

With these examples of the scriptural use of the words baptize and baptism before us, may we not say, how preposterous is it to pretend that these terms necessarily convey the idea of immersion, and

* Heb. 9 : 10. † Num. 8 : 7. ‡ Num. 19 : 14, 18.

that therefore it is essential to the validity of baptism, that the person be completely dipped in water! It is readily admitted that pagan writers frequently, and perhaps more commonly, employ the word baptize in the sense of dipping or plunging. This is one of the significations of the word; but it is not its only meaning. It is also used for the purpose of conveying the idea, to tinge, to stain, to wash, to cleanse. But in the New Testament with which we are concerned, the words in question are used with reference to a rite which is peculiar to our holy religion; and a rite which is significant of the necessity of purification or cleansing. And the idea conveyed by the words, baptize and baptism, is that of washing or cleansing, without reference to the particular mode in which the water is applied. It is not however a literal washing, but spiritual cleansing, which is signified by baptism. Neither immersion nor sprinkling would effect a literal washing. But as this is not the design of baptism, it is not necessary that the water should be applied in the same manner in which it is used when we literally wash ourselves. As used in baptism, water is applied to the body to signify the cleansing of the soul from the defilement of sin, by the application of the blood of atonement by the Holy Spirit. And as the face is not only the more prominent part of the body, but that part which we ordinarily wash, it is therefore appropriate that in baptism, which is significant of spiritual washing, water should be applied to the face. And the examples to which I have referred, clearly prove that according to scripture usage, the word baptize is employed to convey the idea of washing, without regard to the precise manner in which the cleansing element is applied; and that one of

these modes of washing was certainly by sprinkling. We have moreover seen that those persons on whom the Holy Ghost was poured out, are said to be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Therefore, we have express divine authority for saying, that they on whom water is poured or sprinkled, are baptized in a scriptural manner.

Having seen that according to scripture usage, the word baptize is employed to convey the idea of washing by sprinkling the cleansing element, I shall in the next place inquire whether the circumstances connected with the administration of baptism, as recorded in the sacred scriptures, throw any light upon the manner in which the rite was performed.

1. And in the first place, let me direct your attention to some examples in which all the circumstances are unfavorable to the claims of immersion. The first instance of the administration of baptism recorded in the history of the primitive church, is found in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand."* In this example, there is no circumstance mentioned which has any reference to any particular mode after which these persons were baptized. The only information which the sacred historian gives us, is, that they were baptized. But where did this remarkable occurrence take place? It was not in the immediate vicinity of some flowing river, but in the city of Jerusalem. And observe, this multitude who were baptized did not assemble for the purpose of receiving baptism; and consequently, it cannot be suppos-

* Acts 2:41.

ed that they would come with suitable clothing to undergo immersion. The Holy Spirit had just been poured out upon the apostles in a miraculous manner, so that they were enabled to preach in the different tongues of the people of every nation, then at Jerusalem. The report of this miracle being spread throughout the city, "the multitude came together." To the assembled multitude the apostle Peter preached the gospel. After giving an abstract of his sermon, the historian adds, "And with many other words, did he testify and exhort saying, save yourselves from this untoward generation." After the apostle had given them a view of their guilty and exposed condition; had unfolded to them the plan of salvation through that Jesus whom they had crucified, and had explained the nature and obligations of baptism, and the duty of receiving it, they were the subjects of conviction; and in obedience to the divine direction, professed their subjection to the authority of Christ, by the reception of baptism. They had not been instructed in the principles of christianity beforehand, so as to assemble on this occasion prepared to receive baptism. And hence a considerable portion of time must have been spent in communicating that instruction which was necessary to make an intelligent profession of their faith in Christ. Now, when you consider the time which must have been consumed in instructing this multitude, is it reasonable to suppose that three thousand persons could have been immersed during the remaining portion of that day? But if we could persuade ourselves to believe that it was possible to immerse so great a number of persons in so short a period of time, where could a supply of water be found sufficient for the purpose of immersing such

a multitude, in the city of Jerusalem? At the bottom of mount Moriah, to the south-east, flows the fountain of Siloam, which, says Jahn in his description of Jerusalem, is "the only fountain whose waters gladdened the city." Remember, Jerusalem was not a christian city, whose inhabitants were disposed to grant facilities to the apostles in administering the rites of a religion to which they were hostile. They had just crucified the author of this religion, and were "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord Jesus." And is it credible, that they would have permitted the apostles to pollute the pools of the city, which were intended for the supply of the inhabitants, by immersing in them such a multitude? The question then returns upon us, Where could a suitable supply of water be procured for the immersion of such a multitude? On the east of Jerusalem, between the city and the mount of Olives, is the brook Kedron. But this is a winter torrent, in which running water is to be seen only during the rainy season. And at the time of Pentecost, in the month of May, which is summer in Judea, and at which season no rain falls out, the channel of the Kedron was doubtless dry.

When, therefore, all the circumstances of the case are duly considered; when you consider the difficulty, not to say the impossibility of procuring a suitable place within the city of Jerusalem, to immerse such a multitude of persons; when you remember that no preparations had been made beforehand by the apostles for administering the rite, nor by the multitudes for receiving it; and when you consider how small a portion of the day must have remained for the administration of baptism, after the requisite instruction

was given to the multitude, preparatory to the reception of it, we cannot but admit that there are serious difficulties in the way of the hypothesis which maintains that these three thousand converts, who were baptized on the day of Pentecost, were immersed. If, indeed, our Lord had positively ordained that baptism should be performed by immersion, then of course we must submit, however impossible it may be for us to solve the difficulties which present themselves to our view. But this, we have already seen, he has not done. And when, in addition to all these considerations, the fact is kept in view, that on the morning of this very day our Lord himself had baptized the apostles, not by immersion, but by *pouring out* the Holy Spirit upon them, we can have no hesitation in coming to the conclusion, that the apostles baptized these converts in a correspondent manner.

Turn your attention, in the next place, to the case of the jailer, who was baptized in prison. After Paul and Silas had been wantonly and cruelly beaten, they were committed to the custody of the jailer of Philippi, with a particular charge to keep them safely. Having received such a charge, the jailer thrust them into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks. During the night, by means of an earthquake, all the doors of the prison were thrown open. Supposing that the prisoners had made their escape, and that he would be held accountable, the jailer was about to lay violent hands upon himself. "But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, do thyself no harm, for we are all here." By a remarkable display of divine grace, he was awakened to a sense of his danger, was conducted to the Saviour, "and was baptized, he and all his straightway."*

* Acts, 16: 33.

tioned in the narrative, which conveys any allusion to the particular mode, according to which the rite of baptism was performed. But what are the circumstances of the case? Consider the time. It was at the hour of midnight. Consider the place. It was not by the side of a river, but within the walls of a prison. For though Paul and Silas had been brought out of the inner prison, they were still in prison, and were not liberated until the following day. Is it at all reasonable to suppose that within the walls of a jail, there were accommodations adapted to the administration of baptism by immersion? Is there any evidence at all, that there was any thing like a bath in this prison? Is it usual, to provide so carefully for the comfort of the inmates of a prison? And especially, is such the custom of pagan countries? It is quite manifest that all the circumstances are against the hypothesis, that the jailer was baptized by immersion. He procured water to wash the bleeding backs of Paul and Silas, who had been unmercifully scourged, before they were committed to prison; and with a portion of this water, it would seem, that he was baptized, he and all his straightway.

2. Let us now examine some of those examples of the administration of baptism, in which it is alleged that the circumstances favor the claims of immersion. Of John the baptist, it is said, that he "was baptizing in Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there."* The inference which the advocates of immersion draw from this historical fact, is, that John selected a place where there was much water, with reference to a particular manner of performing the rite of baptism. And if, when vast multitudes of people are assembled in a southern latitude to spend

* John, 3 : 23.

days and nights together, water is necessary for no other purpose than immersion, there would be some force in this inference. But if, under such circumstances, a plentiful supply of water is absolutely requisite to the safety as well as to the comfort of those who are assembled together, then, this inference is just as destitute of any stable foundation as "the baseless fabric of a dream." What were the circumstances of the case? John, a distinguished prophet, who had no superior among all those who were born of women, appeared in the land of Judea and announced the near approach of the kingdom of heaven. The ministry of this illustrious forerunner of our Lord awakened a general and an intense interest. Immense multitudes flocked to hear him. "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan."* Had not John been careful to select a place for the exercise of his ministry, where there was a plentiful supply of water, the multitudes who left their homes to attend upon his instructions, in that warm climate, must necessarily have suffered very serious inconvenience; and, in many instances, would have been exposed to imminent danger of perishing in consequence of thirst.

The expression, "John was baptizing," of course signifies more than that he simply performed the rite of baptism. It is descriptive of the exercise of his ministry, a part being put for the whole. He preached to the multitudes who gathered around him. He instructed them in the nature of Messiah's kingdom, which was just about to be established among them: called them to repentance, and warned them to fly from the wrath to come. And such as embraced his

* Matt. 3 : 5.

doctrines, and became his disciples, he baptized. Without any regard, then, to any particular mode of performing the rite of baptism, an abundant supply of water was indispensably necessary, in the circumstances under which he exercised his ministry. There is, consequently, nothing in the fact here mentioned, which cannot be explained in a manner perfectly easy and natural, without supposing that John performed the very laborious service of immersing the vast multitudes who attended upon his instructions.

We are told, however, that John baptized *in the river Jordan*; and that Jesus was baptized of John *in Jordan*.^{*} And it is alleged that such expressions make it evident that the rite was performed by immersion. To this I reply, that the very same language is used in the immediate context, where it does not convey the idea of immersion; and consequently the laws of correct interpretation do not require us to understand the expressions referred to, as indicating that John baptized after the manner of immersion. In the verse immediately preceding, it is said, "John did baptize *in the wilderness*."[†] And in a parallel passage we are informed that "John was baptizing *in Enon*."[‡] No one will pretend that these expressions signify, that John plunged his followers into the wilderness; or that he plunged them into Enon. On what principle, then, can it be maintained, that the very same form of expression, in the other case, must be understood to mean, that John plunged his followers into the Jordan. In the former case, it will be admitted that the language designates simply the place where John instructed and baptized the people, namely, in the wilderness; and why should

* Mark, 1 : 5—9.

† Mark, 1 : 4.

‡ John, 3 : 23.

it not, in the latter instance, be interpreted in the same manner, as indicating the place where he baptized, namely, at, or on the borders of the Jordan?

Again, in the verse immediately following, we find these words: "I indeed have baptized you with water, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." Here, as every scholar knows, the original word translated *with*, is the same which, in the preceding verses, is rendered *in*. Suppose we should understand the Greek preposition in this verse, in the sense on which the argument in favor of immersion is founded. "I have plunged you into water," is language which has been so often repeated that it might be heard without much concern; but, could the pious ear, without being shocked at the impiety, hear the expression, He shall immerse you into the Holy Ghost?

In this declaration, there is a contrast between two different kinds of baptism, the baptism of water and the baptism of the Spirit. Now, it so happens, that we know certainly, in what manner our Lord baptized his disciples with the Holy Spirit; and this may assist us in determining, according to what mode John baptized his followers with water. With regard to the former, the apostle Peter says, "Being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth (poured out) this, which ye now see and hear." It is perfectly evident, then, that our Lord baptized his disciples with the Holy Ghost, by pouring out his divine influences upon them; and why should we not understand the language, "I have baptized you with water," in the same sense, as signifying, that John baptized his followers by pouring water on them?

But who has not heard of the case of Philip and the Eunuch? And it is triumphantly inquired, What plainer proof of immersion could be desired? "They went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him." This text of scripture is continually reiterated in the hearing of the illiterate multitude; and it may satisfy those who are willing to be carried away by the mere sound of words; but every scholar who can examine the original language, must know that it determines nothing at all with regard to the manner in which the Eunuch was baptized. Even should it be granted that the common translation expresses precisely the sense of the original, still no conclusive argument in support of immersion could be built upon it. They went down into the water, and Philip baptized the Eunuch. All this is plain enough. But in what manner did Philip baptize him? This is the question, and on this essential point in the argument in favor of immersion, this plain proof says nothing at all. On what, I would ask, does the argument deduced from this passage depend? Is it the expression, "they went down both into the water?" I reply, if these words prove that the Eunuch was immersed, they prove the same thing in relation to Philip; for both he and the Eunuch went down into the water. It must, then, be something else on which the argument for immersion depends. Is it the word *baptized*, on which the argument rests? I reply, this foundation is too frail to yield it support; for we have already proved that according to scriptural usage, the word signifies to wash, either by sprinkling, or pouring the cleansing element on the thing washed; while there is not a single instance in the New Testament, in which it can be made appear that it must be understood in the

sense of immersion. And hence it appears that, after all, immersion is left to complain, with reference to the support derived from this passage, "It is a bed shorter than I can stretch myself on it, and a covering narrower than that I can wrap myself in it."

Even then, with the advantage which the common translation might seem to afford, this passage of scripture furnishes nothing like a conclusive argument in support of immersion. But every one who is capable of consulting the original text, knows that, according to scripture usage, the following translation is equally literal: They went down both *to* the water, and they came up *from* the water. The very same word which is translated *into* the water, is employed twice in the next verse but one, and is rendered, in the first instance, *at* Azotus, and in the second, *to* Cesarea. I say, then, without hesitation, what no scholar can gainsay, that the original text does not afford the shadow of a foundation for the exclusive claims of immersion.

But, let us inquire a little more particularly into the facts of this case. Philip was directed by a divine messenger to "arise and go towards the south, unto the way that goeth from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is desert." In obedience to the Divine direction, he went, and on his road leading through a desert, he met this officer of queen Candace, and found him engaged in reading the scriptures as he journeyed in his chariot. The particular portion of the word of God which then occupied his attention, was a remarkable prophecy of Isaiah, relative to the person and sufferings of the Messiah, which commences with the 13th verse of the 52d chapter. And it may be remarked, that the sacred text was not then, as it is now, cut up by the division of chap-

ters and verses. In the very beginning of this prophecy, after describing the Messiah as one whose "visage was so marred, more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men," the prophet speaks of the spiritual blessings which he should bestow upon the nations, in these remarkable words: "So shall he *sprinkle many nations*."* The blessings included in this promise are, generally, all those spiritual benefits, which are the purchase of Messiah's blood, which are applied by the Holy Spirit, and which are represented by baptism. And the term employed to signify the communication of these benefits, by the agency of the Spirit through the medium of baptism, is, *sprinkle*. "He shall sprinkle many nations."

Addressing himself to the Eunuch, Philip inquires, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" This humble inquirer after truth acknowledges his ignorance, and desires the messenger of the Lord to come up into the chariot and instruct him. "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus." Philip explained the prophecy, and showed its exact fulfilment in the humiliation, sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. He would, of course, also instruct this humble inquirer after divine knowledge, in the doctrines of the gospel and the value of the blessings which it reveals; the nature of faith in Christ, and the duty of professing his name by the reception of baptism.

The gospel, faithfully exhibited, was accompanied by divine power to the heart of the Eunuch. And now having found him, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write; and having em-

* Isaiah 52 : 15.

braced him as his own Saviour, he desired to avow his attachment to his cause. Accordingly, as they passed along the highway, "they came to a certain water; and the Eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" The language is not such as we would expect to hear applied to a river; but would seem to be naturally used in reference to a spring, or fountain, by the side of the road. And as Philip had before gone up into the chariot, it was perfectly natural for the historian to represent him and the Eunuch now, as going down from the chariot to the water. And as the prophecy which Philip had just explained, represents the Messiah as communicating the blessings of his grace by sprinkling, the natural conclusion is, that when they went down to the water, Philip, taking some water in his hand, sprinkled it upon the Eunuch. And then, as the Eunuch again went up into his chariot, to continue his journey, and as Philip would, of course, accompany him to his chariot before he took leave of him, it was perfectly natural for the sacred historian to represent them as going up from the water. There is, then, nothing in the history of this case which is not perfectly consistent with the supposition that the Eunuch was baptized by sprinkling. And when it is considered that in the very portion of sacred scripture which he was then employed in reading, and which Philip explained to him, those spiritual blessings, of which baptism is significant, are said to be communicated by sprinkling; or, in other words, since the spiritual baptism, which alone is effectual, is communicated by sprinkling, we can have no hesitation in coming to the conclusion that the Eunuch was baptized with water in a correspondent manner.

There are two other passages of scripture in which it is alleged that there is an allusion to the mode of baptism, in the phrase "buried with him in baptism;" and which are, consequently, regarded as conclusive in favor of immersion. Let me, then, request your patient attention, while I inquire, whether, according to the laws of correct interpretation, they can be considered as yielding support to the hypothesis, in whose behalf they are claimed. As the language in both these examples is the same, it will be sufficient to examine one of them. In the sixth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, we find these words: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."* On this portion of scripture I would offer the following remarks:

1. If we should grant all that the advocates of immersion claim, namely, that in these words there is an allusion to the mode of administering baptism, all that in that case could be proved by them, is, that baptism *may be* performed by immersion; not that it must be performed in this way, and in no other. Baptism, according to the scriptures, is significant of spiritual washing, or cleansing, which may be performed in various ways. And we have no hesitation in admitting that the external rite may be performed by immersion; for the validity of the ordinance does not depend upon the manner in which the water is applied to the body. But the apostle is not in this place discussing the subject of baptism; nor is he

* Romans 6:3, 4.

giving directions with regard to the manner of performing the rite. Had it been the design of the apostle, in this place, to give instructions as to the proper mode of administering the ordinance, and had he directed that the person baptized should be buried in water, the case would have been very different from what it is; and there would have been some reason in claiming the authority of the apostle in support of immersion. But it is an entirely different subject which occupies the attention of the apostle; and he introduces baptism, merely for the purpose of illustrating the subject which he is discussing. It is, therefore, unreasonable to consider an insulated phrase, employed in a passage where baptism is not the subject of discussion at all, as determining the manner in which the ordinance must be administered.

2. But I remark, in the next place, that there is a particular incongruity in making a burial in the grave, symbolical of baptism. The grave suggests the idea of corruption and loathsomeness; whereas, according to the scriptures, baptism is significant of cleansing, or purification. To consider a burial as symbolical of baptism, and indicative of the proper mode of performing the rite, is just as incongruous as to regard corruption the symbol of purity.

3. To suppose that there is an allusion to the mode of baptism, is greatly to weaken, if not entirely destroy the force of the apostle's argument. The apostle is here defending the doctrine of justification by faith, without the deeds of the law, against the objection of its adversaries, that its tendency is to lead to licentiousness of life. This objection is introduced, according to the apostle's manner, in the interrogative form. "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" If, says the objector, the grace of God

reigns in the pardon of sin, then let us live in sin, that so the more we sin, there may be an opportunity for the more illustrious display of the riches of grace, in the pardon of it. The apostle rejects the impious thought with abhorrence. God forbid! The supposition that, under any circumstances, a christian can live in sin, is moreover utterly inconsistent with the nature of a work of grace in the heart. "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" And for the purpose of illustrating the truth, that believers are dead to sin, and consequently cannot live in the practice of it, he introduces the subject of baptism. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Christ, were baptized into his death?" It is upon the meaning of this ordinance, and not upon the manner of performing the external rite, that the apostle's argument depends. Baptism is significant of our union to Christ, and our interest in all those blessings which are the purchase of his death. From the believer's union to Christ, it results that he is interested in his death and resurrection and life. As Christ died for sin, that he might make atonement for it, so by virtue of our union to him, we are interested in his death, and are thereby delivered from the guilt of sin, which would subject us to condemnation; from the power of sin, so that it shall no more have dominion over us; and from the pollution of sin, which disqualifies us for the enjoyment of fellowship with God in this life, as well as for admission into his heavenly kingdom. As Christ, after having died for the expiation of sin, was raised up from the dead, in like manner we, being united to him, are raised from a state of death in sin, and enter upon a new life, so that we henceforth live unto God. And as Christ, our risen and exalted head, being raised from

the dead, dieth no more, but ever liveth in glory and immortality; so by virtue of our union with him, because he liveth, we also shall live. According to the argument of the apostle, then, baptism itself, not the mode of performing the rite, but the ordinance itself, according to its spiritual meaning and design, is significant of our union to Christ. We are baptized into his death; or, as the same idea is expressed in a parallel passage, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, *have put on Christ.*"* Our union with Christ is signified by this interesting ordinance; and from the fact of our union to him, it results that we are partakers of the benefits of his death, and are interested in the glory of his resurrection and ascension at the right hand of God. And hence the connection here exhibited between baptism and the death, resurrection and life of Christ.

The humble inquirer after truth, who, instead of surrendering his understanding and judgment to be carried away by the mere sound of words, will look into this passage of scripture, with a desire to understand its meaning, will perceive that the apostle uses a variety of expressions to convey the same general idea. For example, we have the expressions, "Baptized into his death;" "Buried with him by baptism into death;" "Planted in the likeness of his death;" "Our old man is crucified with him;" "Dead with Christ;" all of which convey the same general idea, namely, that we are dead to sin, in consequence of our interest in the death of Christ. A regular antithesis is maintained throughout the whole passage. And contrasted with these expressions, the apostle employs the following: "Newness of life;" "The like-

* Galatians, 2 : 27.

ness of his resurrection;" "That the body of sin should be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin;" "We shall also live with him;" which different forms of expression convey substantially the same idea, namely, that being united to Christ, we are partakers of a new life, whereby we are enabled to live unto God. And of our union to Christ, baptism in his name, and not the manner of performing the rite, is significant. Neither the language which the apostle employs, nor the design of his argument, therefore, has any thing to do with the mode of administering baptism.

4. I remark further, that before any argument in support of immersion can be founded upon this passage, we must, in the outset, assume the very point in dispute; namely, that there is here an allusion to the mode of baptism. If the mode of baptism is not referred to, then it is clear that immersion has no support whatever from the language employed by the apostle. The advocate of immersion, therefore, without encountering the difficulty of proving what in truth he cannot prove, finds it much more convenient to assume the point, that the apostle refers to the mode of baptism. And then he gives the rein to his imagination, and undertakes to trace the similitude between a burial and an immersion. But I would ask, where is the evidence that the mode of baptism was in the view of the apostle's mind? He is not giving directions with regard to the administration of this ordinance; nor is baptism the subject on which he is writing. He is occupied with the consideration of an entirely different subject; and refers to the spiritual meaning and design of baptism, for the sake of illustrating the doctrine of sanctification as the result of our union to Christ. The object

of the apostle, therefore, requires us to look beyond the mere mode of performing the external rite, to that which is of unspeakably greater importance, namely, the spiritual meaning of the ordinance.

Not only, however, is it inconsistent with the design of the apostle to suppose that his language was intended to convey an allusion to the mode of baptism, but, independent of this consideration, the supposed resemblance between immersion and the burial of our Lord is altogether imaginary. By the help of a lively imagination, we may bring our minds to conceive that, between the act of letting down a dead body into the grave, and covering it with earth, according to our mode of interment, and the immersion of a person in water, there is some similitude. But it is of being buried with Christ, that the apostle speaks; and the dead body of our Lord was not covered with earth in a grave. Consider for a moment the circumstances connected with the burial of Christ, as narrated by the evangelists. Joseph, of Arimathea, a rich man, and an honorable counsellor, after the crucifixion of our Lord, "went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in a rock, and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre."* You see, then, that when our Lord's body was buried, it was not let down into the earth; it was not covered with earth, but was carried through a door into a room of considerable dimensions, hewn out of a rock, and deposited there. That this sepulchre of Joseph was an apartment some-

* Matt. 27 : 58—60.

what spacious, is evident from the fact, that Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James and Salome, who came to anoint the body of Jesus, finding the door open, entered into it. And when they went in, they saw an angel in the form of a "young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment."* This apartment, then, in which the body of our Lord was laid, was sufficiently capacious to receive several persons at the same time. And in the side of this apartment the body of Jesus was laid. When these circumstances are kept in view, I must be permitted to say, that the man who can discern any resemblance between the immersion of a person in water, and the laying of the body of our Lord in this open room, hewn out of a rock, deserves the credit of possessing an imagination remarkable for its inventive powers.

But will it be said that, explain it as we may, still there was a burial of the body of Christ; and it is between the idea of immersion and a burial that the resemblance holds? I answer, such a reply may satisfy a person who surrenders his understanding to be led by the mere sound of a word; but, with those who will submit to the trouble of thinking, so as to understand the meaning of plain language, it will do nothing at all to remove the difficulty. The question is not, what is meant by the word "*buried*," but, in what manner was Christ buried? This is the question; and any one who can read his bible, may answer the question. The body of Christ was laid in the side of a large, open apartment, hewn out of a rock. And I will say, in the ear of common sense, that there is no more resemblance between immer-

* Mark 16 : 5.

sion, and the manner in which the body of Christ was buried, than there is between sprinkling a little water on the face, and immersing the whole body in water.

I have already remarked, that the validity of baptism does not depend upon the precise mode according to which the water is applied to the body, nor yet upon the quantity used. The external rite is significant of spiritual washing, or purification, and all that is considered essential in the administration of the ordinance, is, that water be applied according to some scriptural mode of cleansing. However, I regard sprinkling as the most suitable and scriptural mode; and it is the only one to which I am willing to conform in practice. My principal reasons for preferring this mode, before all others, are the following:

1. The word baptize, according to its most common acceptation in the New Testament, is employed to convey the idea of washing, or cleansing. And among all the divinely appointed modes of purification, referred to in scripture, sprinkling was one of the most common. The sprinkling of water upon the person baptized, is, therefore, properly significant of the design of this ordinance.

2. The baptism of the Holy Spirit, of which the external rite is emblematic, is, in the sacred scriptures, always represented as being effected by pouring, or sprinkling. "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh," is a prediction, in the fulfilment of which, those persons who were interested in it are said to be baptized with the Holy Ghost. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you;" is a precious promise, in which the communication of the purifying influences of the Holy Spirit is signified. If, then, the spiritual baptism, of which

the external rite is symbolical, is effected by pouring, or sprinkling, then it is evident that the person on whom the water of baptism is sprinkled, is baptized in a scriptural manner.

3. The blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from sin, and of which the water of baptism is a symbol, is in scripture termed, "the blood of sprinkling." "We are come," says the apostle, "to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to *the blood of sprinkling*, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." And the application of the virtue of the blood of atonement, for the removal of moral defilement, is represented under the idea of sprinkling: "If the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer, *sprinkling the unclean*, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God."* And again: "Let us draw near to God with true hearts, in the full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Since then the blood of atonement is termed the blood of sprinkling; and since the application of its purifying virtue to the conscience, is represented under the idea of sprinkling; therefore, the application of the water of baptism, in the form of sprinkling, is at once an expressive, simple and scriptural mode of administering this ordinance.

4. And, in the last place, I not only greatly prefer this mode, but I am opposed to the performance of this christian rite by immersion; because, baptism administered in this way, is a burdensome

* Heb. 9 : 13, 14.

rite, more in accordance with the spirit of the legal dispensation, than with the mild genius of the gospel. In northern latitudes, the administration of baptism, according to this mode, during a considerable portion of the year, would be attended with greater danger to the health and life of the person baptized, than even circumcision itself. And we can easily suppose a case, in which an individual might desire baptism, and have a right to this christian privilege, and yet, owing to peculiar circumstances, it would be altogether impracticable to administer the ordinance, after the manner of immersion. Suppose, for example, the case of a person, who, under the influence of declining health, is confined for years to his room; or, that of a convict who is confined to a prison. Let us suppose that, under such circumstances, a person becomes the subject of converting grace. Instances of this kind have occurred, and may occur. In the case supposed, the individual whose heart the Lord may have opened to the cordial reception of the truth, would desire to confess the name of Christ before men, and to be recognised as a member of his visible church. And he would not only have a right to admission into the church of Christ, but no faithful steward of the mysteries of God could, consistently, deny him the enjoyment of this right. Suppose such an individual should afford unequivocal evidence of a change of heart; should make a satisfactory profession of his faith in Christ, and should say to the minister of the gospel, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" He who would insist upon conformity to the mode of immersion, could not reply to him as Philip did to the Eunuch, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest;" but would have to give the painful answer, It is impossible to

comply with your request. You have indeed a right to baptism; but in your situation the initiating ordinance of christianity cannot be administered by immersion, and therefore you cannot be admitted into the visible church of Christ. Can this be the law of Him, whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light?

If there was a positive appointment of our Lord and Saviour that, in the administration of baptism, the individual should be completely immersed in water, then of course it would be our duty to observe this particular mode, and none other. But we have seen, from a careful examination of the original institution of baptism, and of the scriptural acceptance of the words baptize and baptism, that this is not the fact. In the original appointment of this ordinance, we have seen that there is nothing at all said in relation to the mode of its administration. The command of the Saviour is simply, *Baptize*. We have carefully inquired into the scriptural acceptance of the word baptize, and we have seen that it is used to convey the idea of washing, without reference to the particular manner in which the water is applied. We have, moreover, seen that our Lord has not only promised to bestow, by sprinkling, those very blessings which are represented by baptism, but also that he actually did, according to his promise, baptize his disciples by pouring out the Holy Spirit upon them. And we are very sure that we cannot err in imitating his example. Having such authority, therefore, we cannot agree to submit to a yoke which men would impose upon us, but which is not required by our Lord and Master.

CONCLUSION.

My dear brethren, for whose benefit, primarily, these remarks have been penned, suffer me, in conclusion, to call your attention to a few practical observations. You regard it as an act of great condescension on the part of God, that he has been pleased to establish a covenant with you and your seed; and you esteem it an unspeakable privilege that your offspring are interested in the blessings of God's covenant. But let us not forget that the enjoyment of distinguished privileges involves correspondent responsibility. The promise is to you and to your children; and on this ground you are permitted to bring your children to God, in the ordinance of his own appointment, that they may be made partakers of the visible sign of their interest in his favor. And having dedicated them to Him, it well becomes us, seriously, to ponder the obligation which lies upon us, to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And you naturally inquire, how shall we discharge successfully this high obligation? To this inquiry I reply,

1. Let it be our constant study to present true religion to the view of our children, in the form of a living example. You have all remarked that at a very early period of life, children evidence an imitative disposition. Before they are capable of forming an idea of abstract principles of morality, they discover a disposition to do what they see others doing. And in consequence of the regard which they naturally have for their parents, as well as on account

of their familiar intercourse with them, they are peculiarly prone to copy after the parental example. How important, then, is it that the tendency of our example should be to impress the minds of our children with the truth, that true religion is the *one thing which is needful!* How carefully should we avoid in their presence every thing like indecent, irreverent or profane language! How necessary is it that we faithfully perform every religious duty, and observe every ordinance of God's appointment, that so by our example we may lead them in that strait way which leadeth unto eternal life!

Our children see that we profess the name of Christ; that on the Sabbath we repair to the sanctuary; and that we take our seat at the sacramental table. But do they see that we walk with God during the week? Are they assembled regularly to unite with us in offering the morning and evening sacrifice to God? Do they see that we reverence the word of God, and use it as a light to our feet and a lamp to our path? My brethren, let it be our habitual endeavor so to walk before our children, that we may say to them, *Be ye followers of us, as we also are of Christ.*

2. Let us be careful to instil into their minds the principles of religious knowledge. As a general fact, it is well known that in youth the character is thrown into that mould which gives a complexion to the man's subsequent life. The principles then implanted, the attachments then formed, and the habits then acquired, ordinarily grow with our growth, and strengthen with our strength.

"'Tis education forms the youthful mind;
Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined."

It must therefore be all important, that while the mind is pliant, and when the character is forming, our youth should be placed under the influence of correct moral and religious principles. If it is designed that a person shall pursue any particular avocation in life, whether it may be some mechanical employment, or some literary profession, the wisdom and experience of the world have decided, that it is highly important to commence in youth a course of preparatory training for it. And must we commence early, and labor assiduously, to prepare our offspring for performing with propriety their part upon the theatre of this transitory state of existence, and yet postpone, to a convenient season, those efforts which are designed to prepare our children for a glorious immortality!

It is a very erroneous, and in its practical tendency, an exceedingly hurtful opinion, to suppose that the youthful mind should be instructed on every other subject save that of religion; that every other department of knowledge should engage our attention in youth, but that the acquisition of religious knowledge should be neglected, until the mental powers have attained to a good degree of maturity. Such a principle is, in every aspect of the case, absurd and pernicious. Are our children rational and accountable creatures? Are they candidates for an eternal state of blessedness or woe? And does their future destiny depend upon the principles they imbibe, and the character they form, in the present life? Then it is preposterous to keep out of view the acquisition of that knowledge, the importance of which is to be measured only by the duration of eternity, until that has been acquired which is valuable merely in reference to this momentary state of existence. And besides,

if we remain idle during this interesting period of life; if we neglect to sow the seeds of religious knowledge in the spring-time of life, the enemy, more active and vigilant, will be employed, and the virgin soil of the youthful mind shall be pre-occupied with the hurtful weeds of error and immorality. And afterwards, it may require much greater labor to eradicate these noxious plants, than would have been requisite at the proper time to implant the principles of evangelical truth and holiness. *Then, in the morning sow thy seed.*

To aid you in the discharge of the important duty of instructing your children in religious knowledge, you may profitably employ those admirable catechisms, received by our church, in which the doctrines of the bible are clearly and succinctly exhibited. Let these be carefully committed to memory, that so, as the powers of the mind are gradually developed, they may find important truth stored up to occupy their attention. Be careful to bring your children with you, when you attend upon the services of the sanctuary. It is the place where God has recorded his name, and in relation to which he has promised, *there I will come unto thee and bless thee.* Bring your children with you, then, when you come to appear before the Lord in Zion, that they may enjoy his blessing. Explain to them, as they are capable of understanding, the meaning and design of those religious services in which you may engage. Their curiosity will often be awakened in relation to those exercises of religious worship which they witness, and they will be disposed to inquire, "What mean ye by this service?" Such inquiries should be encouraged, and should be answered as we may be able. And thus their interest in attending upon

the ordinances of God's appointment will be heightened, while they may derive from them increasing advantage. These things, saith God, with respect to the precepts and institutions delivered to his ancient people, thou shalt teach diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. The experience and observation of every day remind us, that the time is short and that life is uncertain. We know not how soon our children may be left without parents to watch over them; or we may be called to mourn over their removal from us. While therefore we have opportunity, let us be careful to train up our children in the way wherein they should go, having the encouraging promise, that when they are old they will not depart from it.

3. Finally, let me remind you of the necessity and importance of exercising authority over your children in the fear of the Lord. There is perhaps no duty incumbent on us as parents, in which we more generally fail, than in that of keeping our children in due subordination. Youth are naturally impatient under restraint; and under the influence of a spirit of false tenderness, we too often permit them to take their own way, to their serious injury. It is no idle declaration which the Spirit of inspiration has uttered, where we are informed, that "a child left to himself, bringeth his mother to shame." In the history of Eli's family, we have on this subject a solemn admonition. This venerable priest of the Lord was doubtless a pious man, and yet he was lamentably deficient in the exercise of parental authority. And his undue indulgence of his children was at once his sin and their ruin. "The sons of Eli

were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord; and the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord." And what was the result? "The Lord said to Samuel, behold I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house; when I begin I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and *he restrained them not.*" Our children, my brethren, however lovely they may appear in our eyes, are depraved and sinful beings. Their hearts are naturally alienated from God, and there is deeply rooted in their nature a proneness to evil. Possessing as yet but limited knowledge, and destitute of experience; ignorant of the dangers which beset the path of life, and prone to turn aside into those crooked ways which lead to ruin, they are not competent to choose for themselves. God has placed them under our direction; and while he has made it their duty to obey, we are accountable to him for the exercise of authority over them, both in exciting them to duty and in restraining them from evil. To the everlasting honor of Abraham, as a parent, this testimony is recorded: "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." You have professedly joined yourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant; and in the dedication of your children to God in baptism, you have declared your resolution, by the grace of God, to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Then let your light so shine before men, that they seeing your

good works, may glorify your Father in heaven. And that you may enjoy the happiness of seeing your children useful and ornamental members of the church of Christ on earth, and heirs of glory in the heavenly kingdom, shall be the unceasing prayer of your affectionate PASTOR.









